



**Topic: School Fees: Setting and Collection Policy**

**Policy No:**

**Policy Area: COMMUNITY**

**Originally Released: 2000**

**Reviewed/Reformatted: 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2018**

**Date for Review: 2021**

### **Rationale:**

Catholic Schools, have 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<sup>1</sup>, p 50), insofar as this is possible.

Catholic schools aim to minimise potential barriers for parents such as fees and other costs (Mandate<sup>1</sup>, p 7), and to keep costs to parents as low as possible (Mandate<sup>1</sup> p, 38). Catholic Schools seek to avoid material ambitions that might lead to higher fees and force the School into giving counter-witness (Mandate<sup>1</sup>, p. 22).

Catholic 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 comprises tuition fees; levies (e.g. building levies); and other charges (e.g. compulsory excursions<sup>2</sup>, camp fees, 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 Board:*

- 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 Catholic Education Commission of WA (CECWA)<sup>3</sup>.

## CEWA

- Catholic Education Western Australia

## CECWA

- Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia

## Scope

This policy applies to St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Pinjarra, (St Joseph's School) in respect of children enrolled from Kindergarten through to Year 6.

## Principles:

St Joseph's School shall ensure that school fees reflect the socio-economic status of the school community, in the context of the policy rationale.

Financial grounds shall never be the reason for the non-enrolment or exclusion of any child from a Catholic school.

The collection of school fees shall be approached in the spirit of Christian charity and justice.

The withholding of access to students from normal pastoral and curriculum provision shall not be used as a fee collection strategy.

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.

Families with eligible means tested family concession cards (Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card) have an automatic entitlement to school fee concessions.

The confidentiality of all information pertaining to parents and/or guardians and the payment of school fees shall be maintained, as mandated in legislation<sup>4</sup>.

Where parents and/or guardians have the capacity to pay fees, the collection of school fees shall be actively pursued.

## Procedures:

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 General

A standard schedule of fees (example attached) will be produced to ensure consistency and comparability across all schools in the System.

The school shall update annually its own fee policy to reflect:

- any changes to the CECWA *School Fees: Setting and Collection* policy;

- any legislative changes;
- any community socio-economic considerations.

The principal may from time to time request financial information from families to support applications for fee concessions or any other concessions.

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.

On application for admission, parents and/or guardians will be provided with the school’s fee policy.

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**

Application fees, if applicable to the school, shall not exceed \$55.00 or 1% of the school annual tuition fee, whichever is the greater. Application fees are non-refundable.

Enrolment Deposits, if applicable to the school, shall be no more than 25% of the annual school tuition fee and shall be deducted from the first semester’s tuition fees in the year of enrolment. Where circumstances beyond the control of parents result in an enrolment deposit not being paid, the principal shall consider waiving it.

**Fee Setting**

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

Should the School wish to exceed the maximum increase in school fees and charges, it shall obtain the prior written approval of the Executive Director of Education.

**Fee Discounts**

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

The CECWA decision regarding automatic tuition fee discounts has been implemented. The fee level shall be communicated to schools by CEWA during the budget process each year.

The total discounted tuition fee currently in place is as follows:

Kindergarten to Year 6	\$300, per student
------------------------	--------------------

The discounted tuition 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 discounted tuition fee.

Kindergarten to Year 6	30% of tuition fee	\$90 per family
------------------------	--------------------	-----------------

St Joseph’s School adds specific additional charges. These may be levied on a user-pays basis and could include charges associated with, camps, swimming lessons and other activities where there are direct and additional costs associated with such activities.

St Joseph’s School aims to keep these costs to a minimum, within the spirit and intent of this policy, and to assist those families who encounter difficulties in meeting these additional charges.

### Discounts for families

Families with siblings enrolled in Kindergarten through to Year 6 at St Joseph’s School or Year 7 through Year 12 at Mandurah Catholic College are entitled to a level of family discount that shall be determined by the School Board.

The current discounts offered are:

2 <sup>nd</sup> child enrolled	20% of that child’s tuition fee
3 <sup>rd</sup> child enrolled	40% of that child’s tuition fee
4 <sup>th</sup> child enrolled and beyond	100% of that child’s tuition fee

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 St Joseph’s School runs (currently 0.6 FTE).

All students and families are eligible for sibling discounts.

The School shall ensure that the usual family discounts are offered for Special Education students whether siblings attend the same Catholic school or a number of Catholic schools.

### Fee Payment Timeline

1. Annual Fees are sent home in the second week of Semester One.
2. Fifty (50%) of the Annual Fee is due to be paid by the end of Week Five Term One.
3. 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.
4. Fees may be paid by cheque, cash, or EFTPOS transaction at the school office during normal school hours, or by BPay.
5. 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.

6. 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.
7. 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 to the Fee Collection Policy Form, available on the school website or from the school office.
8. 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 to the Fee Collection Policy Form.

#### **Procedures 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.

#### **Procedures 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 direct debit arrangement.

#### **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 written communication shall be sent to the parents, bringing promptly to their attention the outstanding balance.

3. Should there be no response within 14 days, an appropriate person(s) shall approach the parents on a personal basis, in a sensitive, discreet and confidential manner.
4. 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 should be used to remind parents of their financial obligations. This letter should include an invitation to discuss the matter with the school and a specified timeframe for a response
5. 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.
6. If, despite this last letter, there is no response or action the school Board may approve to engage the services of a debt collection agency or a solicitor to recover outstanding fees and any additional costs
7. 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. Before this is done, schools shall inform in writing the Executive Director of Catholic Education
8. Before any enforcement proceedings are taken, such as a Property Seizure and Sale Order, Earnings Appropriation Order, or any other enforcement action, including the launching of a caveat on a property, schools shall obtain written approval from the Executive Director of Catholic Education.
9. Schools shall keep comprehensive documentation of each attempt to resolve the problems of outstanding fees.
10. Under no circumstances can a child enrolled in a school be refused on-going enrolment because their parents have not paid fees.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Mandate of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2009 – 2015

<sup>2</sup> CECWA *School Excursions* policy

<sup>3</sup> Catholic School Board Constitution, Western Australia

<sup>4</sup> *Privacy Act 1988*

<sup>5</sup> Supporting Guidelines for Schools, CECWA *School Fees: Setting and Collection*