

 <p>GUARD - THE - TRUTH ST PAUL'S</p>	Policy:	School Fees, Setting & Collection
	Policy No:	2 – C12
	Policy Area:	Stewardship/School Based Policies
	Committee:	
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2 - C12 School Fees, Setting & Collection

1. 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, insofar as this is possible, while embodying the Church's preferential option for the poor and disadvantaged (Mandate page 50). 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.

The Bishops of Western Australia have approved the collection of school fees from parents as a necessary contribution to the costs of delivering a Catholic education.

2. DEFINITIONS

2.1. School Fees:

For the purpose of this policy statement School Fees shall be considered to be tuition fees, levies and other charges (eg excursions, camp fees, amenities, book hire).

2.2. Application for Enrolment Fee:

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

2.3. 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.

2.4. 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.

3. PRINCIPLES

- 3.1. The collection of school fees shall be approached in the spirit of Christian charity and justice.
- 3.2. Financial grounds shall never be the reason for the non-enrolment or exclusion of any child from a Catholic school.
- 3.3. 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.
- 3.4. 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.
- 3.5. Schools shall ensure that school fees reflect the socio-economic status of the school community.

- 3.6. 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.
- 3.7. Families with eligible means tested family concession cards have an automatic entitlement to tuition fee concessions.
- 3.8. The withholding of access to students of normal pastoral and curriculum provision shall not be used as a fee collection strategy.
- 3.9. Every effort shall be made to protect the confidentiality of all information pertaining to parents and/or guardians and the payment of school fees.
- 3.10. Where parents and/or guardians have the capacity to pay fees, the collection of school fees shall be actively pursued.

4. **PROCEDURES**

4.1. St Paul's Primary School:

- Recognises the Church's preferential option for the poor and disadvantaged.
- Communicates this policy to parents.
- Highlights details of any additional charges as well as information relating to fee concessions.
- Has a timeline for the payment of accounts stated on each account sent home.
- Has a process for negotiating the method of payment and the provision of concessions if required.
- Provides information regarding access to the various forms of government assistance if appropriate.
- Has a procedure following non-payment, up to and including Judgement.
- Will abide by guidelines specified in the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC) and Australian Securities & Investments Commission (ASIC) Debt Collection Guideline: for collectors and creditors

4.2. This policy is to be updated annually to reflect:

- any changes to the CECWA Policy Statement 'School Fees: Setting and Collection;
- any legislative changes; and
- any community socio-economic considerations.

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

4.4. On application for admission parents and/or guardians will be provided with the school's fee policy (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. **Fee Setting**

- 5.1. 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.
- 5.2. Application for Enrolment fees at St Paul's Primary is \$35.00 and is non-refundable.
- 5.3. The CECWA decision regarding automatic tuition fee discounts for the holders of eligible means tested family concession cards shall be implemented. The fee level shall be communicated to schools by the Catholic Education Office during the budget process each year.
- 5.4. The level of sibling discounts shall be determined by the School Board. The following sibling discount levels apply at St Paul's Primary:
 - 1st child enrolled 0%
 - 2nd child enrolled concurrently = 20% of that child's tuition fee
 - 3rd child enrolled concurrently = 30% of that child's tuition fee
 - 4th child and beyond enrolled concurrently = 100% of that child's tuition fee

- Kindergarten fees shall be charged as a proportion (eg 0.6 FTE) of the respective first child full time fee.
 - Sibling discounts apply to kindergarten students.
 - 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.
- 5.5. Levy payments are non-refundable.
- 5.6. St Paul's Primary School shall ensure that the usual family discounts are offered for Special Education students whether siblings attend St Paul's Primary School or a number of Catholic schools.

6. **Fee Collection**

- 6.1. The Principal shall make all reasonable efforts to contact parents and/or guardians in order to resolve fee payment issues.
- 6.2. 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 Paul's Primary 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 Director of Catholic Education (diocesan accountable schools) or the Congregational Leader (order accountable schools).
- 6.3. ***The School Board, having a managerial role with regard to collecting school fees, agree that the following action will be taken by the school to collect outstanding fees:***
- **Initial Fee Statement:**
Within 3 weeks of the start of Term 1 Fee Statements will be sent to all parents and/or guardians requesting for payment to be made or a Direct Debit arrangement set up within 14 days
 - **1st Letter:**
After the 14 day period has passed, families with outstanding accounts and no Direct Debit arrangement set up will be sent an overdue letter requesting that payment is made (or a Direct Debit arrangement is set up) within 7 days.
 - **2nd Letter:**
After the 7 day period has passed, families with accounts still outstanding and no Direct Debit arrangement set up will be sent a second overdue letter requesting an interview with the Principal if payment is not made (or a Direct Debit arrangement set up) within 7 days.
 - **Telephone Call:**
After that 7 day period has passed, families who have still not paid, set up a Direct Debit arrangement or contacted the school will be telephoned to ensure the fee statement and letters have been received and to agree on a payment plan.
 - **3rd Letter & Reminder Statement:**
After that 7 day period has passed, families with outstanding accounts and no Direct Debit arrangement set up will be sent a Reminder Statement and a third overdue letter advising that the debt will be passed to an outside agency to follow up on St Paul's behalf if payment is not made (or a Direct Debit arrangement set up) within 7 days.

- **4th Letter:**
If no communication has been received after that 7 day period, accounts still outstanding with no Direct Debit arrangement set up will be passed to an outside agency to follow up on St Paul's behalf and families will be sent a fourth letter advising that this has happened and that any additional costs of collection will be added to the account in accordance with the School Fees Policy.