



ST MARY'S LAIDLEY

POLICY & PROCEDURE

For School Fees



Document Control

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School Fees and Concession Policy

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to describe St Mary's Primary School's approach to the setting and collection of school fees and for deciding fee concessions. This policy will ensure a consistent approach, one that is fair to families and that allows all students to access a Catholic education and all aspects of the curriculum.

This policy must be read in conjunction with: School Fees, Concession and Other Income

Administration procedure and Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane Code of Conduct.

2. RATIONALE

The Church's duty toward the poor obligates Catholic schools to make a Catholic education available to all students whose families seek it, regardless of financial capacity. As a result, we are challenged to balance financial accessibility with the need to provide high-quality educational services in line with our and BCE's vision, mission, and values.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

Families support the education of their child by paying fees as a necessary contribution to the costs of delivering Catholic education. The Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth) recognises diversity in the capacity of families to contribute to these costs. To address this, BCE promotes a needs-based funding distribution model.



4. PRINCIPLES

St Mary's Primary School must comply with the following principles:

- Accessibility: BCE schools are open and accessible to all families who seek our religious and educational values regardless of financial capacity and ensure all students have access to all aspects of the curriculum, including school functions and activities
- Responsibility: BCE schools are responsible for setting school fees, concessions, and terms for the collection of fees in accordance with BCE procedures. Parishes and School Consultative Committees e.g., school board, should be kept informed of the BCE requirements each year during the budget process
- Affordability and needs-based: as government and the BCE system allocates funds to schools based on need and given the principle of accessibility, BCE schools must consider the capacity of families to pay when setting fees and concessions
- Confidentiality: all information pertaining to school fee arrangements with parents, guardians, and students must be maintained as confidential.

5. REFERENCES

- Australian Education Act 2013.
- School Fees, Concession and Other Income Administration procedure.
- Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane Code of Conduct.



School Fees, Concessions and Other Income Administration

Procedure

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to describe St Mary's Primary School's approach to managing/collection/administration of school fees and levies, concessions, and other income.

This procedure must be read in conjunction with: School Fee Policy and Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane Code of Conduct.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 General requirements

Schools must communicate the school fee structure to parents and guardians every year.

Schools must ensure that financial constraints and hardship do not discourage parents and guardians from enrolling their children by offering fee concessions. To ensure the viability of BCE schools, schools must augment government funding received with charges, levies, and other support from the school community.

No child is to be excluded from a BCE school or college on the grounds of genuine inability of the family to pay fees. All families who are financially able should pay fees as set and advised annually by the school. It is expected that school fees charged will be paid by the due date. Other debtors i.e., not parent/guardians, are expected to pay charges as per the payment terms agreed with the school.

Concessions must be calculated annually using the BCE Concessions template, the financial circumstances of families, and based on a just and equitable formula. Concessions do not transfer from primary to colleges or between school. The concession must be calculated on a case-by-case basis.

3. PROCEDURE

3.1. School fee components

School fees must be separated into the following minimum components:

- Tuition fee
- Capital levy
- School levies and excursions
- Building fund donation (tax deductible), only if there is support in the community
- Library fund donation (tax deductible), only if there is support in the community
- Parish donation, only if requested by the parish and there is support in the community.

3.2 Fee increases

BCE determines the fee increase range, informed by the Commonwealth Government's Direct Measure of Income (DMI) and the capacity to contribute to the School Resource Standard, and communicate this on an annual basis.

Increases must only be considered after a thorough review of expenditure, to ensure transparent and accountable stewardship of resources. All school expenditure must be justified, and needs based.

When communicating with parents or guardians, the language used in relation to fees must be clear and the information regarding fees and levies be transparent and consistent across the community. Consideration must be given to communicating school fee increases to parents in the form of actual dollars per week, per term and/or per year.

3.3 Sibling discounts

Sibling discounts must be offered as percentage discounts (these percentages to be in place by the beginning of 2025 school year):

- second child: charge 60% of first child tuition fee rate ie. 40% sibling discount
- third child: charge 40% of first child tuition fee rate
- fourth child: charge 20% of first child tuition fee rate

3.4 Concessions

Fee concessions must be planned and managed through the BCE Concessions template and approval processes. Using the BCE Concessions template which incorporates the Henderson Poverty Lines data, the Principal (or delegate) determines the fee to be paid or whether further clarification from parents or guardians is required.

The formula for determining a reasonable fee payable for a family is based upon the total disposable income of the family less basic housing costs.

Concessions may be granted by the Principal without necessitating an interview. However, if the Principal is not entirely satisfied that the information supplied is correct, or feels a need to discuss the matter further, the Principal must request an interview with the parent/s or guardian (see s.3.5 below).

Additional considerations:

- in arriving at a fee, the Principal (or delegate) must have in mind a responsibility to the system and its needs, and equity to other parents and students at the school
- an amount, however small, must be charged to all families
- fee concessions apply for one calendar year only. A new application must be submitted annually
- Principals may grant a concession which varies from the amount determined in the Concessions template, if it is felt to be just and necessary. A written record must be kept explaining the reasons for the variation
- Health Care Cards, which are financially assessed by the Commonwealth Government, may be used as supporting documentation for fee concessions.

Families must be supported through a preferential option for the poor.

3.5 Fee and concession interviews

Interviews conducted by the Principal (or delegate) are encouraged. It is advisable for the Principal (or delegate) to validate concessions with another member of the leadership team if they are not present at the interview.

3.6 Full fee paying overseas students

Commonwealth and state governments do not provide recurrent grant funding for the education of overseas students. As a result, schools must charge a higher fee compared to

domestic students. The level of school fees to be charged must consider the School Resourcing Standard and the capital levy.

3.9 Termination of payment

Should an account holder terminate their future financial obligation for the payment of fees, levies and charges for their child, the other parent/legal guardian is requested to submit an Enrolment Confirmation – Revision of Financial Obligations form which covers 100% of the future fees, levies and charges when a termination form is returned. While a student will never be denied a Catholic education due to a family's genuine inability to pay fees, should the Enrolment Confirmation – Revision of Financial Obligations form not be submitted, the school must commence discussions with the parents/legal guardians regarding the ongoing payment of school fees.

3.10 Records management

Schools must maintain records of school administration of fees and concessions in accordance with the Records Management policy and supporting documents (on Spire). This includes protecting the privacy of personal information collected by the school through confidential records management.

All matters are dealt with on a confidential basis. All discussions must be documented, and relevant documentary evidence securely filed. The School Fee Concession Agreement and Payment Agreement (signed by both parties) must form part of this documentation. The concession agreement must be signed by either the Principal or delegate of the school. The authorised delegate includes other leadership team members or an external fee administrator or Business Manager. All approved concessions must be supported by relevant documentation.

3.11 Complaints

Complaints about school fees and concessions must be managed under the Student, Parent, and Guardian Complaints Management policy and procedure.

3.12 Issuing of accounts

Accounts for school fees must be forwarded to account holder/s or debtor within the first two (2) weeks of each fee period e.g., term. School fee charges including the capital levy must be separately identified on the account.

The fee account must show a due date for payment of the fees. The due date must generally be within 14-30 days from the date of issue but must not extend beyond the last day of the fee period in which the fee account has been issued.

Accounts for other income must be forwarded when goods or services are provided. The due date must be within 14 days from the date of issue.

3.13 Reminder statements

On expiry of the due date for school fee accounts or other debtor accounts, a Reminder Statement must be sent, giving the account holder/s a set period (normally 14 days) to pay.

If a suitable response is not received within the school-designated timeframe, the Principal (or delegate e.g., business manager, finance officer, fee administrator) must contact the account holder/s. The objective of the phone call/contact is:

- discuss the outstanding debt value
- determine what assistance is required to assist the family with managing the debt
- confirm a workable approach moving forward.

If there are no extenuating circumstances, the Principal (or delegate) may remind the account holder/s or debtor of the payment undertakings which formed part of the initial enrolment process.

3.14 Collection agency

If, after two (2) weeks from making verbal contact or if attempts to make contact are unsuccessful with the account holder/s or debtor and no satisfactory arrangements have been reached, and there appears to be no other workable solution, then the account may be sent to a collection agency.

Although the account holder/s should pay the school, some will pay the collection agency. If this is the case, the amount received must be remitted to the school by the collection agency on a timely basis and recorded as advised by the Support Accountants team.

3.15 Legal action

On occasions it may be necessary for the school to proceed to legal action. Action may only occur when there is clear evidence of ability to pay, yet the account holder/s or debtor refuse to do so or delay paying. This action must not include the garnishing of wages or forced sale of property.

To proceed to the following levels of legal action, where the account holder/s or debtor credit rating may be affected:

- Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT), the decision can be made by the Principal
- Magistrates Court, approval must be obtained from the Head of Finance (HoF) or Manager – School Finance Support in their absence.

When seeking approval for the Magistrates Court, schools must provide the following via email:

1. A summary of the actions that the school has undertaken to date to recover the outstanding debt.
2. For school fee accounts, confirmation the school holds on file the original signed Enrolment Confirmation form and any subsequent Revision of Financial Obligations form where the parents/guardians accept responsibility for their fee obligations.
3. A brief response to each of the following:
 - is the debt significant enough to warrant legal action?
 - is there clear evidence of capacity to pay?
 - is there a good and reasonable chance of successful recovery of most, if not all of the outstanding debt?
 - have all other avenues been exhausted to try and recover the debt?
 - is there an expectation that the legal costs involved are not significant and will not outweigh the potential recovery amount?

Once there is a judgement through the Magistrate Court, further approval through the Head of Finance or Manager – School Finance Support in their absence is required before actioning the decision.

3.16 Enrolment

When parents/guardians apply for enrolment of children for whom they have not paid school fees at a previous systemic school, the enrolment must not be confirmed until the debt is paid or waived on the previous principal's advice. Arrangements for payment of future fees must then be put in place before proceeding with the enrolment.

4. REFERENCES

- Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane Code of Conduct
- School Fees Policy
- Student, Parent, and Guardian Complaints Management policy and procedure