

ST. BRIGID'S SCHOOL COLLIE

SCHOOL FEES: SETTING AND COLLECTION POLICY

Reviewed: 2004
Reviewed: 2006
Reviewed: 2009
Reviewed: 2014
Reviewed: 2015
Reviewed 2017
Reviewed 2020
Next Review: 2023



RATIONALE:

As a Catholic school, operating as part of the Catholic Church, we have a vital mission, to provide a Catholic education for the children of all families in our Parish. As such there is an obligation on us, as a school community, to ensure that all families who desire their children to be educated in their faith, can do so without fear of prejudice on the grounds of financial concerns.

There is also a recognition that State and Commonwealth funding, although significant, does not provide all of the money necessary to maintain the operation of the school. We are very much dependent upon the financial contributions of the families within the school to maintain the best possible level of educational service that we provide. There is therefore an obligation on the part of families with children at St Brigid's to contribute to the cost of running the school. This obligation, which shall be termed "School Fees" for the purposes of this policy includes the total cost of educating a child and comprises tuition fees, amenities fees, various levies and any other charges (including for example camp fees, music lessons). In the interests of justice and equity for all members of our school community there is the expectation that all families will contribute to the collection of School Fees according to their ability to do so.

PRINCIPLES:

To ensure that there is equity and justice in all financial matters relating to School Fee collection, the following principles will apply.

1. The inability to pay School Fees will not be a factor in determining the acceptance or enrolment or re-enrolment of a family into the school.
2. The inability to pay School Fees will never be a reason for the exclusion of a student from the school.
3. The inability to pay or non-payment of School Fees will never be a reason for the withdrawal or withholding of services and activities to the student.
4. The School Board have a role in the setting and collection of School Fees in accordance with the guidelines of CECWA. The setting of school fees by the School Board is part of the budget process each year. Increases to School Fees shall be in accordance with CECWA parameters and guidelines.
5. School Fees should reflect the socio-economic status of the school community. Charges on a user pay basis (e.g. Amenities and other charges such as camp fees) should be kept to a

minimum to assist those families who encounter difficulties in meeting these additional charges.

6. The Principal will actively pursue the collection of School Fees by those families with the capacity to pay.
7. Families with limited capacity to pay School Fees have an entitlement to claim a School Fee concession. In the practice of Christian charity all applications for School Fee concessions will be treated with dignity, fairness, compassion and confidentiality. All information pertaining to parents and the collection of School Fees will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and shall be maintained as mandated by legislation.
8. On application for admission parents must be provided with a copy of this policy. A parent acknowledgment of the School Fees collection procedure must form part of the Application for Enrolment Form.
9. School Fees and all discounts (including CECWA's Health Care Card Discount Scheme) shall be clearly advertised and easily accessible to parents, including on the school website and (if relevant) in the format prescribed by CECWA.
10. Any changes to this School Fees: Setting and Collection Policy will be communicated to parents and the school community at least four weeks prior to the proposed implementation date.

Procedures for Payment of School Fees (lump sum):

School Fees are to be announced to the school community before the end of the previous school year. These shall be published prominently and unambiguously in newsletters and on the school website.

11. A statement of Amenities payable per child (including consumables, text books, equipment, insurance, incursions/excursions, swimming lessons) for a particular school year shall be issued to each parent before the end of the preceding school year.
12. A School Fee account will be sent out during early Term 1 detailing all known amounts that are payable for the whole school year. This will include tuition fees for semester 1 and semester 2, building levy for semester 1 and semester 2, P&F levy, outstanding amenities and any other amounts that are known at that point in time (such as year books, camps, graduation shirts).
13. Parents have the option of paying the entire account by week 5 of Term 1. Alternatively, parents can elect to defer the payment of the tuition fees, levies and any other specific amounts relating to semester 2 until week 5 of Term 3. All other items included in the account will be payable by week 5 of Term 1.
14. School Fee accounts will also be sent out early in Terms 2, 3 and 4 to parents that have amounts payable at that point in time. These will include amounts owing by parents that elected to defer payment of amounts relating to semester 2. These accounts may also include extra charges that were not known when the initial account was issued in Term 1.
15. School Fees may be paid by cash, cheque, EFTPOS or credit card at the school office during normal office hours. Bpay is also available to settle family accounts via code on statements.

Procedures for Payment of School Fees by Direct Debit:

16. As an alternative to the above payment procedures a parent may elect to pay School Fees by entering into a "Direct Debit" arrangement with the school. Under such arrangement it is agreed that estimated School Fees for a year may be paid over time by authorised regular deductions from a nominated bank account. Deductions can be weekly, fortnightly or monthly.
17. The amount of the Direct Debit Deduction can be calculated by the School and will reflect all estimable School Fees for the particular school year. The amount of the deduction calculated will also reflect that those School Fees are required to be paid in full by the end of Week 4 of Term 4.
18. School Fee accounts will be sent out during early in each term.
19. Any outstanding School Fees for the year that have not been recovered under the Direct Debit or other payment arrangements must be separately paid by week 5 of Term 4.
20. If at the end of Term 4, an account is in a credit position (ie the family has overpaid amounts due under the direct debit arrangement) then the credit can be carried forward and applied against amounts due for the following year. If the family will not have any students enrolled in the next year then the credit will be refunded.

Procedures for Late Payments and Non-payments of School Fees

21. When the Principal is concerned about non-payment of fees (either lump sum or direct debit), then the school may send out **Collection Letter One**. This letter is a reminder and asks parents to pay the account within 14 days or make contact with the Principal to discuss the account.
22. Should there be no response within 14 days, the school may issue **Collection Letter 2** by registered mail. This letter requests prompt attention of payment or to contact the principal if they are experiencing financial difficulties within 14 days.
23. Should there be no response within 14 days, the school may issue **Collection Letter 3** by registered mail. This letter requests that the payment be made in full within 7 days of this dated letter or that contact is made with the principal to arrange an alternative payment plan otherwise a debt collection agency may be engaged to coordinate this payment.
24. In the event that a debt collection agent is not successful in contacting the parent and/or establishing a debt repayment plan, the school may consider initiating court proceedings. Before this is done, the school must inform in writing the Executive Director of Catholic Education. Furthermore, before any legal enforcement proceedings or actions are taken the school shall obtain written approval from the Executive Director of Catholic Education.
25. It is noted that if the parent meets with the Principal to discuss the matter (within 7 days of receiving Collection Letter 3, then a resolution may involve payment of the account or a signed Variation of School Fees Schedule.
26. Comprehensive documentation shall be kept for each debt recovery matter including each step taken to resolve the matter.
27. The Principal will provide the School Board an overview of the number of families with doubtful debt and the amount outstanding debts per family. All families are de-identified. The principal will also provide the board the number of families who have an agreed concession, discount or variation of school fees. All alternative arrangements are recorded and filed.

Concessions, Discounts and Variation of School Fees:

28. Any parent seeking relief or a concession in relation to the payment of School Fees is encouraged to contact the Principal to discuss the matter.
29. Families that are holders of an eligible means-tested family concession card (Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card) are entitled to an automatic school fee concession. Such families are simply required to provide evidence that their card is valid for the duration of the academic year to obtain the school fee concession. The card is required to be presented to the school each year. The amount of this school fee concession is set by CECWA, and ordinarily applies to tuition fees and most levies.
30. Families with siblings enrolled in the school are entitled to a family discount as determined by CEWA. Families receiving automatic tuition fee discounts are also eligible for family discounts.
31. Kindergarten fees will generally be charged as a proportion of the Year 1 fee based on the number of days that the Kindergarten program runs.

Further Notes:

32. Any reference to "parent" in this policy means any parent(s) or guardian(s) as the case may be.
33. School uniform are not considered to form part of School Fees. and must be separately paid on purchase
34. Stationery Lists are not part of school fees and can be purchased from an outside provider.
35. If a family leave the school part way through a year, then tuition fees are payable for every week or part thereof that the child(ren) remained enrolled in the school. The amount payable is calculated as a proportion of school weeks (or part thereof) enrolled over the total number of school weeks (or part thereof) in the relevant semester. School holiday weeks are not taken into account. If a leaving family has paid a full semester tuition fee, in relation to a semester where enrolment ceases part way through the semester, they will be refunded the amount of any overpayment of tuition fees.
36. If a request is made for a student to have an extended absence, then in situations where that absence exceeds a full semester (or 20 school weeks in total) then the family will not be required to pay, or will be credited as the case may be, an amount equivalent to the tuition fees referable to one
37. The School may decide to collect an Enrolment Deposit (i.e. School fees paid in advance as a deposit to secure enrolment). If an Enrolment Deposit is collected it shall be no more than 25% of the annual school tuition fee and it shall be deducted from the first semester's tuition fees.
38. If the School decides to charge a non-refundable Application Fee (i.e. a charge for processing an enrolment application), then this fee cannot exceed the greater of \$55 and 1% of the annual tuition fee.