



Stella Maris Primary School

School Fees Policy

Rationale

At Stella Maris we aim to support our children in accessing the best possible education while including others in our Catholic community that have less capacity to pay.

Stella Maris School Fees Collection policy reflects the intentions of Catholic Education Commission for Victoria (CECV) and the Catholic Church in our context. The Catholic Church's preferential option for the poor obligates Catholic schools to ensure that no student is denied a Catholic education because of an inability to pay.

Definitions

School fees are what the school charges families to contribute to the education of their children.

Private income is that portion of a school's income which is not derived from government recurrent and targeted grants.

Socio-economic status (SES) is a measure of an individual or group's standing in the community and is based on variables including income, occupation, educational attainment.

School levy is a specific purpose school charge that is in addition to the school fees.

Principles

Responsibility: Each Catholic school is responsible for setting its own fees.

Accessibility: Catholic schools should be accessible to all Catholic families irrespective of capacity to pay.

Needs-based: As governments and the CECV Ltd allocate funds on the basis of need, and given the principle of accessibility, Catholic schools must take into account the ability of parents to pay when setting and collecting fees.

Procedures

The purpose of these procedures is to provide schools with strategies for the setting of fees and fee remissions that take into account a broad range of considerations, including the principles articulated in this document.

1. The level at which the fee is set is a matter for the local school authority, giving due weight to the matters raised in this document.
2. Schools need to ensure that the fee level is appropriate and takes into account the SES level of the school community and other relevant factors such as the cost of living (Consumer Price Index).
3. A range of approaches may be taken in relation to the granting of fee remissions or fee concessions. However, in the interests of equity and accountability, these processes need to be transparent and communicated appropriately.

Families with more than one student

A Family Fee Structure has been devised to provide a substantial discount for the additional students at the school and other Catholic schools. This approach may include higher levels of discounts for families with more than two students at the school.

Procedures for Fee Payment and Collection of Unpaid Fees

The purpose of these procedures is to provide schools with support for the development of strategies related to the payment of fees and the collection of unpaid fees that are consistent, fair and equitable.

The steps to be taken in relation to the payment of fees are as follows:

1. Fees and their payment should be discussed with parents at the time of enrolment. Relevant fee policies and guidelines should be made available at that time.
2. Stella Maris should make provision for parents to pay in a number of ways eg; direct debit, weekly, monthly, per term or yearly. A full statement of fees payable for the year should be provided to each parent at the start of the school year and periodic statements (e.g. per term) follow.

The case of parents who are able but unwilling to pay fees, can be problematic for schools. Such cases are likely to surface only after the child has commenced in the school and parents refuse to meet their financial commitments. Every effort must be made to help those parents understand their obligations. It becomes a matter of justice to other parents and students at the school that they should meet their commitments. The recovery of unpaid fees, particularly if this involves legal action, must be approached sensitively.

The steps to be taken in relation to the collection of unpaid fees are as follows:

1. For those who fail to keep up with their commitments it is essential the matter be brought to their attention promptly and responses sought. Refer to Sample Letter 1: Fee Obligations below.
2. Follow-up on a personal basis should follow no response. This follow-up should be conducted by the Principal in a sensitive, discreet and confidential matter.
3. If this fails, a formal letter from the Parish Priest should be used to remind parents of their obligation. This letter should include an invitation to discuss the matter with the Parish Priest and a specified timeframe for a response.

4. If this course of action is not successful, the school authority may decide to send a letter seeking payment and outlining the possible actions, including legal action, that could occur if payment is not received within the specified timeframe. Refer to Sample Letter 2: Fee Obligations below.
5. As a final step, court proceedings may be initiated but prior approval of the Director of Catholic Education must be gained (for Congregational Owned Schools the Congregational Leader). Under no circumstances can a child enrolled in a school be refused on-going enrolment because their parents have not paid fees.



This policy was ratified in 2009

This policy will be reviewed biannually

This policy was last updated in 2018

Sample Letter 1: Fee Obligations

Dear

Our records show that your son's/daughter's/children's fees are currently overdue and that the amount of \$X is outstanding.

If our information is correct, it would be greatly appreciated if you could attend to this matter by settling the account as soon as possible.

Should your family be experiencing financial difficulties, please make an appointment with the Principal to discuss the situation.

A copy of the account is attached for your information and record.

It would be appreciated if we could receive your response within 14 days of the date of this letter.

If you have paid the account within the last few days, please disregard this letter.

Yours sincerely

Sample Letter 2: Fee Obligations

Dear

We refer to our earlier correspondence dated _____ regarding your account for school fees and note we have failed to receive your response. We advise that the account is well overdue and your early attention to this matter is required.

It is the policy of all Catholic schools that fees are kept up to date so that we can provide the full range of services.

Fee concessions may be granted in cases of financial hardship or where other special circumstances exist. If this is the case, please contact me/the Principal to arrange an interview to discuss this matter.

It would be appreciated if you could attend to this matter by _____, following which the School may refer this matter to solicitors/debt collectors.

If you have paid the account within the last few days, please disregard this letter.

Yours sincerely,