



SCHOOL FEES POLICY

INTRODUCTION

St. Mary's Parish School Williamstown (St. Mary's) is a co-educational Catholic school that strives to provide its students with an holistic education in an environment formed by the Gospel and imbued with the values of St. Mary MacKillop.

In formulating the school fees policy for St. Mary's the school is guided by the values of St. Mary MacKillop and the fee setting/collection practices outlined by Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM).

All prospective families of St. Mary's give their firm undertaking that they support the Catholic education, ethos and conditions of entry of the school at enrolment, and as a result, commit to this throughout attending years. In order to deliver quality Catholic education St. Mary's relies upon the collection of school fees and levies as a necessary supplement to government funding. Responsible financial stewardship is crucial to the future of St. Mary's. The Principal and Parish Priest will set fees and levies at a level which will result in a financially viable school, whilst keeping parents' fees and levies as affordable as possible.

OBJECTIVES

To guarantee that the St. Mary's Parish maintains its long history of providing Catholic Education and that commitment to school fees is acknowledged so the present is managed and the future is viable.

POLICY AIMS

- To provide the principal and the parish priest with guidelines to set reasonable fees and levies taking into consideration recurrent funding provided by the Australian and State Government's (Socio Economic Status index and Educational Maintenance Allowance funding formula, respectively) that fund the system according to need
- To ensure that fee and levy setting supports the future viability of the school to provide a Catholic school education to the Parish community To ensure school fees and levies are as equitable as possible for all parents of children attending St. Mary's
- To provide understanding of school fees and levies set by the school
- To establish schools fees and applicable levies as compulsory.

VALUES

Social Justice, Equity, Accessibility, Dignity, Openness and Sustainability..

RATIONALE

St. Mary's Parish makes 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 special preference for the poor and disadvantaged. St Mary's has a responsibility to communicate the financial constraints under which they operate, to parents enrolling their children in the school. Parents are required to make a commitment to support the school's education programme financially by paying fees and levies

PRINCIPLES:

1. All schools shall have a direct relationship between school fees and the socio-economic status of the school community
2. The school Principal as delegated by the Parish Priest has the responsibility for the financial management of the school and, consequently, is responsible for the collection of school fees and school levies
3. The School shall actively pursue the collection of all school fees
4. The practice of charity requires that requests for fee concessions be treated with dignity, compassion and confidentiality
5. The inability to pay school fees and school levies shall never be the primary reason for the non-enrolment or exclusion of any child from St. Mary's
6. The withholding of services to students will not be used as a fee collection strategy
7. Every effort shall be made to protect the confidentiality of all information pertaining to parents and the payment of school fees.

POLICY

Setting of Annual Fees

1. The Principal as delegated by the Parish Priest shall in consultation with the School Board, set annual fees and levies during the budget process each year
2. The level of school fees and levies charged must be sufficient to support St. Mary's educational program and will reflect a broad range of considerations, including:
 - Socio-economic status (SES) level of the school community
 - Needs-based formula for the distribution of Government grants
 - Cost of living (Consumer Price Index)
 - School operating budget
3. In the final term of the school year, parents will be informed in writing of the forthcoming year's Family School Fee and Individual Student Levy
4. Invoices are raised and issued to St. Mary's families in February each year
5. The school fees and levies comprise the following:

A. Family Fee

A fee will be charged annually per family regardless of the number of siblings attending the school. This fee supplements the annual operational costs for both the recurrent and capital areas as per Federal and State funding guidelines

B. Application Fee

On application for enrolment, parents will not be charged an application fee

C. Administration Fee

Upon acceptance of an enrolment offer, families will be charged a one off administration fee to process the enrolment. This is a non-refundable fee

D. Individual Student Levy

1. An individual student levy will be charged annually
2. Payment of the Individual Student Levy is required in full at the school office prior to the commencement of Term 1 each year
3. The composition of the student levy includes:

- Amenities (Stationery): The money is used to purchase a wide range of textbooks and library books, stationery, art and craft materials and other sundry items consumed by the children during the course of the year
- Excursions/Incursions: including transport and entry where applicable. School excursions are compulsory and refunds for non-attendance are not available
- Sacramental: contributing to the cost of medallions, certificates etc
- Swimming Tuition and Sports: including transport and entry
- The student levy does not include the cost of camps. Refer Camp Levy 'G'

E. Parish Levy:

1. St. Mary's, like all other Catholic parish primary schools, derives its existence from the parish to which it belongs. Consequently, families that choose to send their children to a Catholic school also have an obligation to contribute to the Parish to ensure its continued viability
2. An annual Parish Levy is charged to school families not contributing to the Parish Thanksgiving/Stewardship Program as a matter of equity to the broader St. Mary's Parish
3. Students of the school will during the school year utilise Parish resources, services and facilities i.e. the Church, school hall and the Parish Centre and the Parish Levy represents a contribution towards their upkeep
4. The Parish Levy is due each year and payment can be made directly to St Mary's Parish
5. The Parish Levy is completely separate from St. Mary's Primary School fees and levies and is administered directly by the Parish Priest.

F. School Building Fund:

Payments to the School Building Fund are voluntary donations and highly welcomed. Funds are used for the purpose of debt servicing loans and providing for the future capital development of the school. All schools in the Catholic Education system must pay into a central co-responsibility fund to assist in the on-going development of all schools. All donations into the fund are tax deductible.

G. Camp Levy

1. For students in Years 4, 5 and 6 a camp/excursion levy applies
2. School camps and excursions form an integral part of the educational curriculum, and as such attendance is compulsory
3. Camp fees shall be invoiced individually.

H. Year 6 Specific Items

1. Two additional year 6 specific items will be charged and are payable directly to the school:
 - a. Rugby Tops and
 - b. Costs associated with participation in the Graduation evening

Terms of Payment:

1. School Fees are payable in advance and within 14 days from receipt of statement
2. Parents who are unable to make full payment of their school fees by the due date are expected to contact the Principal to discuss an alternative payment plan prior to the payment due date
3. The frequency of payment of fees is elected by the family:
 - a. Annually - one invoice payable in full in term 1

- b. 3 Cycles (3 invoice cycles at the start of T1, T2 & T3 covering the full yearly school fee)
 - c. Monthly or Fortnightly (nominating on the school issued direct debit form the preferred option to cover the full school fees for that year)
4. If these arrangements are not able to be met, other options for payment may be negotiated with the Principal.

Payments Options:

1. Fees may either be paid by cash, cheque, credit card, (Master or Visa)internet banking (our preferred option) or Direct Debit
2. Forms for direct debit can be obtained from the office and there are no additional charges for the use of Credit cards
3. Each year a new Direct Debit Instalments form needs to be completed

Enrolment:

1. No family shall ever be refused a place in the school because of financial difficulties
2. Families experiencing hardship are invited to approach the Principal to discuss their circumstances and to arrange mutually satisfactory terms for payment. Requests for special terms must be negotiated each year.

Mid-term enrolment:

1. A family enrolling a child during in Term 1 will be charged:
 - a. The administration fee
 - b. Full school fees
 - c. The full individual student levy
2. A family enrolling a child up to the end of Term 2 will be charged:
 - a. The administration fee
 - b. A pro-rata school fee
 - c. The full individual student levy
3. A family enrolling a child during terms 3 and 4 will be charged:
 - a. The administration fee
 - b. Pro-Rata school fees
 - c. 70% of the individual student levy

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

1. Eligible applicants can apply for the State Government's Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) through the school office
2. Regular inserts will be placed in the school newsletter to generate awareness amongst families of the EMA scheme, eligibility criteria and submission dates.

Fee Concessions

For families experiencing genuine financial hardship, or where other extenuating factors exist, concessions on Family School Fees may be granted by the Principal and Parish Priest following verification of these circumstances.

1. Families wishing to apply for concessional fees will need to arrange an appointment with the Principal
2. Fee concessions will be determined in a non-discriminatory manner according to the principles of justice and equity
3. Concessions are granted for a school year. Where further concessions are required beyond the current school years, new arrangements will need to be renegotiated at the start of each school year
4. Reasons for granting a fee concession will remain confidential in order to protect the family's privacy.

Reimbursement of fees:

1. One full term's notice in writing to the Principal is required before the withdrawal of a student from St. Mary's
2. In the event of a family withdrawing a child from the school mid-term, there will be no reimbursement of Family fees paid in advance for that term. Reimbursement will be made for any remaining full terms only and as agreed by the school and the family
3. The Individual Student Levy is non-refundable
4. Fees paid on an annual basis will be reimbursed for any remaining full terms where they have been paid upfront and at the discretion of the Principal
5. If a payment schedule was agreed by the family/principal or genuine concessions applied in financial hardship cases, reimbursement may be offered but a recalculation will be carried out so that any concessions are cancelled. Individual cases will be treated on their own merits and the school's decision will be final
6. There is no reimbursement of school fees for families with a student on a Leave of Absence as St. Mary's will retain an enrolment place for that child eg: extended family holiday.

Collection of Outstanding Fees:

1. In accordance with the CEOM Policy 2.27 School Fees 2009, strategies and procedures are available to the school to facilitate the collection of outstanding school fees and levies. These are outlined in the Collection of School Fees and Levies Policy
2. In the event of a family separation the balance of fees, levies and any additional charges (debt collection fees as charged) incurred, remain the responsibility of both parents unless a court approved order is received by the school stating otherwise. The school will:
 - a. Raise one invoice that is issued to both parents
 - b. Expect that both parents agree financial responsibilities and liabilities between themselves
 - c. not facilitate any financial mediation between the parents to collect fees and
 - d. hold both parents liable for the payment of fees.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- CEOM Policy 2.27 School Fees, 2009 available at: <http://web.ceomelb.catholic.edu.au>

RELATED SCHOOL POLICIES

- Enrolment Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Recovery of Outstanding School Fees and Levies Policy
- Parents as Partners in Catholic Education

	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
Principal James Sheedy		
Parish Priest Father Greg Trythall		
Chairperson Charles Attard		

