

Related Policies/Guidelines

Enrolment

Financial Administration for Schools

Record Keeping

Fees Concession Guidelines

Purpose

To ensure that tuition fees charged by schools to families are in accordance with the fee levels set by the Catholic Education Commission (CEC) and that local fees are charged in accordance with the fee levels approved by the School Board/School Community Council.

To ensure that fee remissions and write offs are authorised and that appropriate action is taken to recover unpaid school fees from parents.

To ensure that fee remissions are granted appropriately and consistently so they support those in genuine financial need and allow these parents to maintain their dignity.

To provide guidance on whether families are entitled to a refund of fees paid where a child withdraws part way through a term.

To provide guidance on the circumstances that would lead to a family structure for fee billing purposes.

Policy

School tuition fees must be charged in accordance with the fee levels set by the CEC. The CEC determined percentage of Tuition fees is remitted to the Catholic Education Office at the end of each term.

No student is refused enrolment, is excluded, or is disadvantaged because of an inability (as opposed to an unwillingness) on the part of the parents/guardians to meet financial requirements.

Every effort is to be made by the School Board/School Community Council to recover fees from parents who are deemed to have the capacity to pay.

A family is entitled to a refund of prepaid school fees if they withdraw a child in the first half of a term and have given at least two weeks written notice.

A family arrangement for fee billing purposes is deemed to exist where an adult with parental responsibility has signed both/all enrolment forms and either a sibling relationship exists or the child and adult with parental responsibility reside predominately at the same address.

Definitions

Fee Remission

An arrangement whereby a parent is not required to pay the full amount of fees.

Fee Write Off

The process whereby the school no longer records a fee as outstanding on its books due to it being deemed to be irrecoverable.

Parish School

An Archdiocesan Primary or Central school principally serving a particular Parish.

Parental Responsibility

A person is considered to have parental responsibility for a child or young person if:

- they are either a parent or a step-parent (through marriage or domestic relationship (NSW¹ or ACT²)) or a legal guardian of all the relevant children; or
- a court order is in force in relation to a child in their favour which supports their application; or
- family circumstances mean that a child's natural parent is unable to take responsibility for a child and the child is now being cared for by themTM.

Sibling Relationship

A sibling relationship exists where one of two or more children have one or both parents in common, which would include adopted children and step children where one or both parents in common have parental responsibility for all children.

Child

'Child' is defined in section 995.1 of the ITAA 1997 as:

...the individual's adopted child, step-child or ex-nuptial child.

Procedures

1. *Recording fees in the school's accounts.*

- All families must be charged the full fees (comprising the CEO tuition fee and local levies), with any approved fee remissions or write offs processed through the school's accounts. The reasons for the granting of a fee remission or write off must be documented.

2. *Fee Remissions and Write Offs.*

- Fee remissions and write offs are approved by the School Board/School Community Council. A Fees Committee, being a sub-committee of the Board/School Community Council, is established to make recommendations regarding fee remissions and write-offs. The Fees Committee includes, but is not limited to, the Principal, Board/School Community Council Treasurer (or other appropriate independent person not employed at the school) and the School Secretary or Bursar.
- The Fees Committee considers all requests for fee remissions in the strictest confidence. The names of applicants are not divulged to the School Board/School Community Council when making recommendations on fee remissions.
- Applicants are requested to apply for a fee remission using the Archdiocesan Application for Reduction of Fees form.

¹ S 5 Property (Relationships) Act 1984 (NSW)

² S 169 Legislation Act 2001 (ACT)

TM They would need to provide evidence to support their status as a legal guardian and/or a statutory declaration regarding family circumstances.

- The Fees Committee will apply the Archdiocesan Fees Concession Guidelines to each application for fees remission to assist in ensuring all decisions are made in a consistent and impartial manner. The particular short term and long term circumstances of each case also is considered in reaching a decision.
- Fee remissions normally only apply in the year they are granted and are reviewed annually.
- The Fees Committee may recommend a full remission, part remission, or that a family is not eligible for a remission. The Committee may also extend the time over which it will accept the payment of outstanding fees.

3. *Collection of unpaid school fees*

The following procedures are to be followed after the normal process of reminder letters and interview with the School Bursar or Principal have not proved to be satisfactory:

- In Parish Schools, the Principal consults with the Parish Priest, in his role as leader of the Parish community to establish whether formal recovery processes are appropriate and adopted on a case by case basis.
- The School Board/School Community Council writes to parents reminding them of their commitment to pay school fees and requesting payment prior to the matter being referred to a debt collector for action. The letter invites the parents/guardians to arrange an appointment with the Principal to discuss in confidence any difficulty in being able to pay their outstanding fees.
- In the event of an unsatisfactory response, the Principal or School Board/School Community Council makes arrangements with a debt collection agency to pursue the unpaid fees.
- A representative of the debt collection agency makes contact with the parents to seek recovery of the outstanding debt.
- In the event of an unsatisfactory response, the debt collection agency provides a letter of final demand to parents allowing ten days for contact with the school prior to the possible commencement of legal action.
- If the result is unsatisfactory, the Principal notifies the CEO Head of Resource Management and Strategy of the names and address of people who are to be summonsed. It should be noted that the school will incur extra costs if legal action is pursued.
- The Principal advises the CEO Head of Resource Management and Strategy if action remains to be taken after a summons has been ignored and of any action taken in relation to the Small Claims Court.
- When considering debt recovery action, the School Board/School Community Council takes into account the cost of recovery, the value of the debt, the likelihood of successful recovery and the message that debt recovery action gives to the community.

Under no circumstances is the school or its agents permitted to conduct matters in an intimidating or threatening manner, or seize goods and chattels for the recovery of outstanding debts.

4. *Refund of School Fees where a child is withdrawn during term time*

- Where a child is withdrawn from the school part way through the term and the school has received a minimum of two weeks written notice of this, the family is eligible for a refund of fees as follows:
 - Where the date of departure (taken from the last day in the week the student leaves) is within the first half of the term, 50% of that term's fees plus all fees for any subsequent terms paid.
 - Where the date of departure (taken from the last day in the week the student leaves) is in the second half of the term, the family would not be entitled to a refund of fees for that term.
- If the notice period given has been less than the minimum then refunds will be at the discretion of the Principal giving regard to the circumstances of departure.

5. *Eligibility to be treated as a family for billing purposes*

- The following decision making process is followed in determining whether a family structure exists for fee billing purposes.

- It is accepted that a family situation could occur where an adult has parental responsibility for the children being considered as part of a family unit.
- To be eligible to be treated as a family unit for billing purposes, a person with parental responsibility must have signed the enrolment forms to accept responsibility for the children and satisfy one of the following two conditions:
 - That a sibling relationship (as defined above) exists between the children, or
 - That the person with parental responsibility and the children predominately reside at the same address (either permanently or at least a 50% shared custody arrangement).
- A child cannot be a sibling for more than one family situation for CEO Tuition Fee purposes. Where a child may be considered to be part of two or more family structures, they can only have the sibling discount arrangement for that child applied to one family (usually the family where the child predominately resides).
- The principles adopted here can also be used to determine whether a family/sibling relationship exists for enrolment priority purposes.

References

Operational Guidelines and Constitutions for Catholic Parish Primary, Central and Secondary School Boards/School Community Councils and Parents & Friends' Associations (May 2010)

Income Tax Assessment ACT 1997

Legislation ACT 2001

NSW Property (Relationships) Act 1984

Forms

Nil

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