



2- C12 SCHOOL FEES SETTING AND COLLECTION

RATIONALE

St Emilie's has a responsibility to make a Catholic education available to all Catholic students whose parents seek a Catholic education for them, while embodying the Church's preferential option for the poor and disadvantaged (Mandate, p 50), insofar as this is possible.

It is essential to minimise potential barriers for parents such as fees and other costs (Mandate, p 7), and to keep costs to parents as low as possible (Mandate p, 38).

St Emilie's avoids material ambitions that might lead to higher fees and potentially be giving counter-witness (Mandate, p. 22).

St Emilie's has a responsibility to communicate the financial constraints under which they operate to parents enrolling their children in Catholic schools.

Parents are required to make a commitment to support Catholic education financially by paying fees as a necessary contribution to the costs of delivering a Catholic education.

DEFINITIONS

School Fees:

- for the purpose of this policy statement, School Fees shall include the total cost of educating a child and comprises: tuition fees; levies (e.g. curriculum levies, or IT levies); and other charges (e.g. book hire, insurance, compulsory excursions 2 , camp fees, amenities, building levies, etc.).

Application Fee:

- the fee associated with processing an application for student enrolment into a school.

Enrolment Deposit:

- school fees paid in advance as a deposit, associated with securing a student enrolment into a school, after an offer of enrolment has been made by the school.

Role of School Board:

- The Board is responsible for the financial management of the school, including the setting and collecting of school fees in accordance with the policies and guidelines of the CECWA.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all families, in respect of children enrolled from Kindergarten through to Year 6.



PRINCIPLES

4.1 St Emilie's will ensure that school fees reflect the socio-economic status of the school community, in the context of the policy rationale.

4.2 Financial grounds shall never be the reason for the non-enrolment or exclusion of any child from a Catholic school.

4.3 The collection of school fees shall be approached in the spirit of Christian charity and justice.

4.4 The withholding of access to students from normal pastoral and curriculum provision shall not be used as a fee collection strategy.

4.5 Families with limited capacity to pay school fees have an entitlement to claim a school fee concession. Requests for fee concessions shall be treated with dignity, fairness, compassion and confidentiality.

4.6 Families with eligible means tested family concession cards (Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card) have an automatic entitlement to school fee concessions.

4.7 The confidentiality of all information pertaining to parents and/or guardians and the payment of school fees shall be maintained, as mandated in legislation.

4.8 Where parents and/or guardians have the capacity to pay fees, the collection of school fees shall be actively pursued.

PROCEDURES

5.1 School fees are announced to the school community before the end of the previous school year. Fees and all discounts, including CECWA's Health Care Card Discount Scheme, are clearly advertised and easily accessible to parents. This includes fee brochures, school websites and parent newsletters.

5.2 St Emilie's complies with a standard schedule of fees to ensure consistency and comparability across schools in the System.

5.3 St Emilie's annually updates our fee policy to reflect:

- a) any changes to the CECWA School Fees: Setting and Collection policy;
- b) any legislative changes;
- c) any community socio-economic considerations.



5.4 The Principal may, from time to time, request financial information from families to support applications for fee concessions or any other concessions.

5.5 Families that are holders of an eligible means-tested family concession card are simply required to provide evidence that their card is valid for the duration of the academic year.

5.6 On application for admission, parents and/or guardians will be provided with the school's fee policy.

5.7 Acknowledgment of the **fee collection procedures** is on the Application for Enrolment form which shall be signed by both parents and/or guardians. In the case of a sole custodial parent or guardian, one signature will suffice.

Fees Prior to Enrolment

5.8 Application fees, shall not exceed \$55.00. Application fees are non-refundable.

5.9 Enrolment Deposits, will be no more than 25% of the annual school tuition fee and shall be deducted from the first semester's tuition fees in the year of enrolment.

Fee Setting

5.10 Annual school fees shall be set by the School Board during the budget process each year. Increases to total school fees shall be in accordance with the maximum increase parameters annually set by the CECWA.

5.11 In the event that St Emilie's needs to exceed the maximum increase in school fees, written approval of the Executive Director of Catholic Education will be sought.

Fee Discounts

5.12 Families with limited capacity to pay school fees have an entitlement to claim a fee concession. Requests for fee concessions shall be treated with dignity, fairness, compassion and confidentiality.

5.13 The CECWA introduced the **Health Care Card Discount Scheme** in 2005 to provide an automatic fee concession for the holders of eligible means tested family concession cards. This discount shall be implemented across all year levels, from Kindergarten to Year 12.

The total discounted school fees for holders of eligible means tested family concession cards are set as follows:

Kindergarten to Year 6 - \$300 per student



These school fees will be annually reviewed by the CECWA, based on changes to the eligibility income thresholds, and shall be communicated to schools by the CEWA office during the budget process each year.

St Emilie's may add certain specific additional charges for holders of eligible means tested family concession cards. These may be levied on a user-pays basis and could include charges associated with eg camps or other activities where there are direct and additional costs associated with such activities.

We keep these costs to a minimum, within the spirit and intent of this policy, and we assist those families who encounter difficulties in meeting these additional charges.

Family building levies are charged at the corresponding percentage of the Health Care Card school fee.

Kindergarten to Year 6 - 30% of HCC fee \$90 per family.

Schools may add certain specific additional charges for holders of eligible means-tested family concession cards.

Discounts for Families

5.14 Families with siblings enrolled in Kindergarten through to Year 6 in the same Catholic school are entitled to a level of family discount that shall be determined by each School Board or Council.

St Emilie's applies the following family discount levels:

2nd child enrolled 20% of that child's tuition fees

3rd child enrolled 40% of that child's tuition fees

4th child enrolled and beyond 100% of that child's tuition fees

5.15 Kindergarten fees are charged as a proportion of the respective Year 1 fee. The specific proportion shall be equal to the FTE of the Kindergarten program that the school runs.

5.16 All students and families are eligible for family discounts, including families who receive automatic tuition fee discounts as holders of eligible means tested family concession cards.

Fee Collection

5.17

- Fees and their payment are discussed with parents at the time of enrolment. Relevant information on school fees and the specific school policy are made available at that time;
- St Emilie's facilitate multiple ways and frequencies for parents to pay e.g. debit card, credit card, direct debit or bank transfer; and weekly, monthly, per term or yearly;
- Fees for the following year are communicated to in advance of the year end, and are published prominently and unambiguously in newsletters and on the school website;



- A full statement of fees payable for the year is provided to each parent at the start of the school year and periodic statements (e.g. per term) follow.

5.18 The case of parents who are able, but unwilling to pay fees, is problematic. St Emilie's makes every effort to help parents understand their obligations as a matter of justice to the whole school community. The recovery of unpaid fees, particularly if this involves legal action, must be approached sensitively to protect the child as much as possible from the public embarrassment that could arise.

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

1. A written communication shall be sent to the parents, bringing promptly to their attention the outstanding balance.
2. Should there be no response within 14 days, an appropriate person(s) shall approach the parents on a personal basis, in a sensitive, discreet and confidential manner.
3. If the personal approach cannot be made, or no action results from it within another 14 days, a formal registered letter from the school Principal should be used to remind parents of their financial obligations. This letter should include an invitation to discuss the matter with the school and a specified timeframe for a response.
4. Should there be no response or action within 14 days of the letter, the school Principal shall send a formal registered letter with a final notice, seeking payment and outlining the possible outcomes, including legal action, which could occur if payment is not received within the specified timeframe.
5. If, despite this last letter, there is no response or action the school Board may approve to engage the services of a debt collection agency or a solicitor to recover outstanding fees and any additional costs.
6. In the event that debt collection agent is not successful in contacting the parents or in establishing a debt repayment plan, schools may consider initiating court proceedings. Before this is done, schools shall inform in writing the Director of Catholic Education
7. Before any enforcement proceedings are taken, such as a Property Seizure and Sale Order, Earnings Appropriation Order, or any other enforcement action, including the launching of a caveat on a property, schools shall obtain written approval from the Executive Director of Catholic Education (diocesan accountable schools)
8. St Emilie's keeps comprehensive documentation of each attempt to resolve the problems of outstanding fees.
9. A child enrolled at St Emilie's will not be refused on-going enrolment because their parents have not paid fees, however it is expected that parents will work closely and respectfully with the school.

References

- 1 Mandate of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2009 – 2015
- 2 CECWA School Excursions policy
- 3 Catholic School Board Constitution, Western Australia



4 Privacy Act 1988

5 Supporting Guidelines for Schools, CECWA School Fees: Setting and Collection policy

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