



Our Lady of Hope School

Greenwith

POLICY DOCUMENT

<h2>School Fees</h2>

SCHOOL FEES POLICY

VISION

Our Lady of Hope School vision is to provide our students with "A journey in faith and learning". Inspired by Our Lady of Hope, we are a Catholic School committed to faith, hope, love and learning. Against this background and three of our core values of support, inclusion and service we have a compassionate approach to working with families regarding the payment of school fees.

RATIONALE

Continued government support requires that the Catholic community maintains an appropriate level of financial support for its school.

Our Lady of Hope School is committed to providing Catholic Education to all, irrespective of the inability of families to pay fees. However, families have a responsibility to contribute equitably to the payment of school fees in order to continue the financial viability of the school. Therefore, those families who are able to pay are required to do so. It is the policy of the school that no child will be denied a Catholic Education because of a family's genuine inability to pay full fees.

AIMS

The School Board will have an identifiable procedure for the determination, collection and remission of school fees.

IMPLEMENTATION

Finance Committee

- Finance Committee of the School Board shall be formed on an annual basis to oversee all matters relating to school finances, including the oversight of fee collections.
- The Finance Committee shall be chaired by the Board Treasurer and will usually consist of the Bursar, Principal, Deputy Principal, and Treasurer.
- This committee usually meets monthly, one week prior to each Board Meeting.

School Fees

- School Fee charges shall usually be assessed annually.
- With respect to the Vision of the school and this policy, fees shall be set by the Board and information distributed to families prior to the end of the school year.
- The fee charges are for Tuition, Composite Fee (which includes classroom and subject materials, excursions, and other consumables), ICT Levy, and Diocesan Capital Fund Levy.
- All Extra Curricular Activities must be paid prior to commencement of activity and payment is non-refundable.

ISSUING OF SCHOOL FEE ACCOUNTS

- At the end of each calendar year, information outlining the ensuing year's school fees and charges will be distributed to families.
- School fee accounts for the whole year will be posted home to families early in the first school term.
- Statement of Account Balances for Terms 2, 3 and 4 will be posted home early in each of those terms.
- The timing of posting school fee accounts may vary according to School Board or school requirements.

PAYMENT AND COLLECTION OF FEES

To ensure a regular cash flow for the school the following methods of payment will be accepted and are available via Direct Debit (Bank Account or Credit Card), BPay, EFTPOS, Cheque/Money Order or Cash. Direct Debit or BPay are the preferred option for payment of school fee accounts. **AMEX and Diners Club cards are not accepted.**

Payment options shall include;

- Payment of fee account **in full** by the end of week 4 of term 1 will enable a discount of 5% on the total of the fees for the year, as determined by the Our Lady of Hope School Board.
- The total of the fee account including levies to be divided into equal (nearest dollar) **weekly, fortnightly, monthly or term** instalments.
- Payment is to be made as per the fee payment option sheet detailing due dates for payment of fees. Reminder letters and/or follow up accounts will be posted home, and if no response, either by communication or payment, is received within 14 days of the date of the letter, personal contact will be made by the Bursar or Principal.

If a student leaves part way through a term, pro-rata school **tuition** fees will be payable up to the date that the student leaves the school. If fees have been paid in advance, families will be entitled to reimbursement of any overpaid fees using the appropriate pro-rata calculation of fees due for that year.

The school will engage the services of an appropriate debt collection agency for the collection of overdue accounts where all avenues of communication are ignored and persistent non-payment of overdue accounts has been exhausted, unless prior arrangements have been made with the Bursar or Principal. Debt Collection fees and charges will be added to the account.

WITHDRAWAL OF A STUDENT

In order to ensure the responsible financial management of the school, we need to have an accurate idea of our enrolment numbers when we budget for each School Year. One full term's notice of your intention to withdraw a student from the school at the end of a school year is required in writing to the Principal. Where this is not adhered to, the school reserves the right to charge a full term's school fees. Extraordinary circumstances will be taken into account and the decision on the payment of these fees will be at the discretion of the Principal

FEE REMISSIONS

Fee Remission Applications for genuine hardship are assessed annually. Parents are requested to contact the Bursar or Principal regarding the need for fee remissions. The Principal and the Bursar will review applications for fee remission and will make the decision. Their decision will be communicated in writing to the family.

Families of approved School Card eligible students usually receive a 40% reduction on tuition fees only. The amount of reduction will be assessed annually by the School Board and may change as a consequence.

Applications for school fee remissions on hardship grounds for families that do not qualify for School Card will be considered in line with the guidelines in appendix 1 attached.

ADDITIONAL CHARGES

School camps are conducted annually for children in Year 6\7 and may also be conducted in Year's 4 & 5. Fees vary each year and families are invoiced separately to school fee accounts.

Children also have the option to learn a musical instrument at school or attend extra sporting carnivals. These optional activities are based on a user pays system are therefore not included as part of the School fees.

Please note additional charges are not included in direct debit and credit card payment plans. If you require additional charges to be included into payment plans please contact the School Bursar

REFUSAL TO PAY FEES

School Boards are sometimes faced with a family genuinely able to pay the agreed fees, but who refuse to do so.

In such case, the following will occur:

- Personal contact from the school shall be made to provide an opportunity for an explanation if written request for payment is ignored.
- If a family falls in arrears by more than four weeks a reminder letter will be sent by the Bursar. This will be followed by a second letter after 14 days, if there is no response from the family.
- Failure to respond to repeated requests for payments will result in a final notice being sent, informing of the possible use of the school's debt collection service.
- Failure to pay within 14 days of receipt of final notice may result in further action, which will include:
 - the employment of a debt collection agency
 - possible legal action to recover outstanding fees

REPORTING PROCESS

- The Principal or Bursar will report on relevant issues relating to fee remissions and collections at Finance Committee Meetings.
- The Finance Committee, through its chairperson, reports at each Board Meeting on the number and amount of remission approved, number of applicants and bad debts, and raises any relevant matters to be decided by the Board.
- The School Board and Finance Committee respect the confidentiality of all information regarding applications for remission and unpaid fees and family names shall be available only to the Bursar and the Principal.

Attachments: Appendix 1

Approach to determining school fee remissions on hardship grounds for families that do not qualify for School Card.



Chairperson

12/12/2017

Date



Principal

12/12/2017

Date

Approach to determining school fee remissions on hardship grounds for families that do not qualify for School Card.

- It is difficult to make decisions on school fee remissions in hardship grounds that are consistent, objective, equitable and just, when the school is approached by families for a fee remission, when they don't qualify for school card.
- It is not seen as appropriate to intrude on a family's personal financial situation any more than is necessary.
- Furthermore, it is not seen as appropriate to make judgments about what families spend their income on and whether they should be giving school fees a higher priority.
- There is a real concern for those families that just miss out on qualifying for School Card and what the school can do to support them.
- To try to address all these issues the Principal and Bursar use the following approach as a starting point to help make decisions in this area.
 - Use the same approach that School Card uses and only ask families for income information. By doing this we are taking out of the equation what people choose to spend their income on. That is their choice and their business, and by taking it out of the equation we believe we are treating everyone more equitably. Furthermore, we are not intruding on families' financial situations any more than is necessary.
 - If a certain level of income, depending upon the number of children in the family, qualifies the family for School Card, and therefore a 40% discount on school fees (according to the CEO guidelines), then it is possible to work out a pro-rata approach to offering discounts to those families who apply for a fee remission that do not qualify for School Card.
 - For example: If a family has two children and their income is \$37413pa or less, they will qualify for School Card and get a 40% discount on their school fees, and get \$149 paid by the government towards their book and composite fee.
 - If a family has two children and their income is \$37437pa, they do not qualify for School Card. In this example, using the approach that I am proposing, if \$37413 equates to a 40% discount on school fees, it could be argued that each 1% of this discount equates to \$935 (i.e. \$37413 divided by 40 = \$935).

Therefore, in this example, in an attempt to use an approach that is consistent with School Card, to determine what is a fair, just and equitable discount to offer this family that doesn't qualify for School card, it is appropriate to reduce the discount offered by 1% for every multiple of \$935 that their income is over the \$37413 that would qualify them for School Card and the 40% discount.

Doing this in the example in question, would mean that the family would still get a 40% discount on their school fees from the school, because their income is only \$24pa over the income required for two children to get School Card.

This would seem totally appropriate and the only difference between this family and one that is earning \$24pa less and therefore qualifies for School Card is that they would not get the \$149.00 paid by the government towards their book and composite fee.

- Using this approach, if a family with two children and an income of \$54328 applies to the school for fee remission, the following would apply. Because the difference between this income and the \$37413 that qualifies for School Card is \$16915, which is 18 lots of \$935, the discount that would be offered would be reduced by 18%, thus resulting in a 22% discount being offered to that family. This would seem to be a reasonable discount to offer when taking into account the difference in incomes involved.
- This approach will be used as a starting point for working out a remission to offer families that apply for it on financial hardship grounds, and in the majority of cases the resulting reduction in fees would be adequate to support the family. Should the family indicate that they still could not afford the fees, even with the reduction offered using this approach, there would need to be further consideration of their particular financial situation, to see if there was any justification to tailor the remission offered more specifically to their particular financial situation.
- The examples quoted apply to families with two dependent children. The figures would be different for families with a different number of children, but the same approach would still apply.
- The approach outlined in this appendix is as an internal management tool to be used by the principal and bursar, to assist in making decisions about applications for fee remissions from families that do not qualify for School Card. *The Figures quoted in this appendix are only example figures used to illustrate the logic and calculations applied to giving discount. These figures may change as the School Card eligibility income changes*