



Policy Number:	COLLEGE 09
Policy Name:	School Fee Policy
Contact Officer:	Business Manager
Date Approved by Executive:	March 16, 2021
Date of Next Review:	March 2024
Related Policies:	Fee Concession Policy Enrolment Policy

PREAMBLE

God is at the centre of our College...Mercy is the heartbeat of the Gospel. We encourage every student to grow in the fullness of life and realise their potential through the bread we break at school, the bread of relationships and the bread of conversation. Let us engage the heart and bring faith to life and life to faith (Thomas Groome).

LEGISLATION

This policy takes into account relevant legislative requirements within the state of Victoria, including the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in *Ministerial Order No. 870*. This policy applies to St Joseph's College staff, including employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy.

1. RATIONALE

1.1 *"We aspire to live by the core values of spirituality, compassion, justice, excellence, hospitality, community and service."*
(Vision Statement)

1.2 *"By virtue of their belonging to the Catholic community, children have a right to education in our Catholic Schools. Parents choosing to exercise that right on behalf of their children accept the consequence of obtaining funds to cover the cost involved in providing such education."*

1.3 *"However children should not be excluded from Catholic Schools because their parents are unable to pay school fees."* (Enrolment Guidelines for Victorian Catholic Schools)

2. PURPOSE

2.1 Fees for education in a Catholic school are an in-built component of the total funding of Catholic Education.

2.2 A proportion of the funding for Catholic Schools comes from the Commonwealth and State Governments. The remaining proportion of the funding is raised through private financial contribution to supplement the government's contribution.

2.3 The major source of this private financial contribution is the School Fee which may be supplemented with other contributions, e.g. donations, fundraising activities.

3. OVERVIEW

3.1 St Joseph's College is one of twelve Catholic Secondary Colleges in Australia owned and administered by the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISM PNG). It is

a Catholic School and is conducted in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church, as interpreted by the Bishop of the Diocese of Ballarat in the spirit of Mercy.

3.2 St Joseph's College is also a business (albeit a non-profit organisation) with assets and liabilities and importantly, the need for a managed cash flow. As with any other business, the college has employees, creditors and loan repayments, which have to be met as and when they fall due.

3.3 In determining the fee structure for the college, the College Advisory Council is aware of the necessity to keep it as realistic as possible to cater for the wide income range of parents of the college, whilst also considering the needs of the college in its endeavors to provide ever expanding curriculum opportunities and facilities to students.

4. POLICY OBJECTIVES

4.1 This policy is developed to facilitate:

- Setting a level of fees that will encourage student enrolment through balancing the need for responsible financial management within the college while maintaining sensitivity to the financial capacity of parents.
- Provision of financial resources to maintain a wide ranging curriculum, which meets the needs of children for the development of their full potential.
- Provision of guidelines and procedures that are balanced, workable, effective and flexible so that the most desirable current year and past year fee collection rates are achieved, whilst at the same time keeping access to the college for all Catholic children.
- Delivery of special concern for the disadvantaged in keeping with the school policy, keeping in mind the matter of justice to other parents and students.
- Achievement of School Fee Policy goals in unison with the college's overall policy and mission statement.
- The recovery of unpaid fees must be approached humanely and sensitively.

5. SCHOOL FEES

5.1 Global Fees

5.1.1 Fees are set each year with the assistance and recommendation of the College Advisory Council and remain in force until such time as they are amended for the next year.

5.2 An invoice will be sent to families in February of each year for school fees. If a family requests that the fees be invoiced by terms, this can also be accommodated.

5.3 The school fees have been set for the 2021 year and are:

- Year 7 \$4,189
- Year 8 to Year 12 \$5,276

6. FAMILY DISCOUNTS

6.1 If families have more than one child attending the College the following discount will apply:

- Second Child – 5% Discount
- Third Child – 10% Discount
- Fourth Child – 15% Discount

Please note: Students must attend the college concurrently and reside at the same address to receive a family discount.

7. FEE REMISSIONS

7.1 The college must ensure that parents are aware of the procedure to be followed in the case of financial hardship. To establish eligibility for fee remissions, parents must make a formal application for relief. This must be supported by adequate personal financial information submitted to the Business Manager by the end of the second week of the relevant term. Such special arrangements are to be reviewed annually.

7.2 Discounts or remissions of fees may be considered:

- After completion of the Fee Concession Application.
- Consideration will include the relative financial situation of the family supported by a current taxation return, evidence of any concession entitlements (health care card) and Centrelink income statements (if applicable).
- On the understanding that fee arrangements will be negotiated annually and the relative financial situation of the family updated.
- After verification of amounts received for Youth Allowance, Maintenance Allowance, Family Allowance or other sources.

7.3 Fee remission, be it in part or in full, is granted to parents of students whose declared financial position indicates that they are unable to meet the set fees. Such concessions are granted solely at the discretion of the Principal.

7.4 An application for fee remission without complete financial documentation will not be considered.

8. OPTIONAL & NON-COMPULSORY ACTIVITIES

8.1 All optional and non-compulsory activities are to be paid for in advance and prior to participation. Extra-curricular activities such as the Debutante Ball, etc. are payable prior to the event. Charges for these activities cannot be charged to the school fee account.

8.2 Parents of students in receipt of fee assistance, or who are in arrears with their school fees, should note that students generally will not be able to participate in extra-curricular college activities not included in Global fees such as:

- Overseas study tours;
- Debutante Ball.

8.3 This restriction applies irrespective of who may be funding the student's participation in the activity.

9. FEE COLLECTION

9.1 Payment of Fees

9.1.1 Fees are normally due and payable within thirty (30) days of fees being generated, however the college offers the following special arrangements:

- Direct Debit – weekly, fortnightly, monthly, by term
- BPAY
- EFTPOS Facility
- Other arrangements by negotiation
- Centrepay

9.2 Unless prior fee payment arrangements have been negotiated, every effort should be made to collect fees by the due date in each term. Where payment is not possible, contact should be made to offer one of the fee repayments options listed above.

9.3 If scheduled payments are not being received, contact will be made with the family renegotiating the missed payment. If necessary, parents will be requested to attend an interview for the purpose of arranging a firm undertaking to pay outstanding fees.

9.4 The college has developed a Fee Collection Procedure, which outlines the process for fee recovery.

10. ARRANGEMENTS FOR DEFERRED PAYMENT

10.1 Where the family of a student cannot meet school fees by the due date or they wish to pay fees by instalments, they are to contact the Business Manager as soon as possible, but not later than the due date. These requests may be made by telephone or in person but are preferred in writing. They will be considered on an individual basis.

10.2 If the situation facing the family changes, where they are not able to meet the normal requirements of the College, in relation to the payment of school fees, then the family must inform the College of the change in their situation.

11. ACTION TAKEN ON OVERDUE ACCOUNTS

11.1 Fees are charged in advance on a term-by-term basis. The due date for payment is listed on the account unless special arrangements are made. Reminder statements are issued where payment is overdue or where a family is in default of an agreed arrangement.

11.2 Parents who have selected to pay their accounts by instalment and the instalment is overdue, or in the case of a Direct Debit, have insufficient funds, then a letter will be sent home requesting that payment be rectified.

11.3 The case of parents who are unwilling to pay fees, pose greater difficulties. Such cases are likely to surface only after the student has commenced at the college, and parents refuse or are reluctant to meet their financial commitments.

11.4 Every effort will be made to help those parents understand their obligations.

11.5 Recovery of unpaid fees will be approached humanely and sensitively to protect the student as much as possible from the public embarrassment that could arise.

11.6 It becomes a matter of justice to the other parents and students, that all should meet their debts. Families avoiding their obligations to pay place an increased burden on parents making payments. This also decreases the college's ability to provide the best possible education.

11.7 The college may employ the services of a debt collector and/or solicitor to assist in recovering monies due.

11.8 Legal Action is taken on overdue accounts after all other measures have failed.

12. SPECIAL DISCOUNTS

12.1 Any granting of concessions is at the discretion of the college Principal, and will only be considered after a meeting between the family and the Business Manager, during which the circumstances justifying the need for a concession will be fully discussed.

12.2 The Principal and Business Manager will agree to a special discount on an individual basis, depending on the circumstances at the time, subject to the Fee Collection Policy. This arrangement is for one year only.

13. CHANGE IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTS/GUARDIANS

13.1 Parents must inform the Principal if there is a change in their relationship with each other since the completion of their application form (e.g. divorce or separation). If any change regarding responsibility for tuition fees is proposed, then a new form is to be completed by the person who is proposed to assume obligation of the paying of school fees.

14. REFUND OF FEES TO EXISTING STUDENTS

14.1 The college bases its teacher staffing budget and other related educational expenses budget on the student population as at the August Census from the prior year. This is then confirmed in the current years February census. The college receives funding based on the numbers of students as reported by the Census in February and August.

14.2 Where a student exits the college mid-term, it cannot be assumed that another student will be waiting to fill their position. The college is committed to the above expenditure and could not reasonably consider refunds in these cases.

14.3 All families agree in writing to abide by the college's policies and procedures upon enrolment of their child. In instances where a student exits the college without providing one term's notice in writing or equivalent, one term's fees will apply. Charging of the fee is not a penalty for withdrawal without notice but a calculation of genuine economic loss incurred by the college. This is the reason the late withdrawal fee is applied.

14.4 The college plans for, and commits to, a range of staffing costs and services, such as a laptop leases, camps and excursions, in advance. Where a student is withdrawn without sufficient notice, the college may not be able to fill that place at late notice which results in a commitment to costs that are no longer required. The withdrawal of a student in shorter than the agreed notice period now also becomes a cost incurred by other parents. Naturally the college will exercise discretion over fees in exceptional cases such as personal hardship or family bereavement.

14.5 Parents may appeal in writing should they believe that their circumstances are exceptional.

15. CAMPS AND LAPTOPS

15.1 The college offers compulsory camps at most year levels. This is covered by the Global Fee. As such if a student is unable to attend the camp there is no refund of any portion of fees.

15.2 All students are provided with a college issued laptop and storage bag. As these are leased from an external provider and will need to be returned at the lease end, they remain the property of the college at all times. These costs are covered by the Global fee.

16. OVERSEAS EXCHANGE STUDENTS

16.1 The college encourages the Exchange Student Program. We welcome those overseas students who elect to visit our college and also those of our students who have the privilege to visit overseas schools under the Exchange Program.

16.2 Incoming overseas students will be subject to an Administration fee (inclusive of uniform hire, book requirements, use of a college issued laptop and any excursion costs incurred during their stay). This cost will be determined at the time of exchange in consultation with the Principal.

16.3 Students embarking on an Exchange Studentship will not be charged any fees during the time of their absence.

16.4 Their place at the college will be guaranteed on their return.

16.5 This is conditional on the period of exchange not exceeding twelve months and the student not remaining overseas in excess of the period of the exchange.

17. FEE COLLECTION GUIDELINES

17.1 The fee collection process is as follows:

- Tax invoices are sent at the beginning of each school year; and per term for families who choose to pay quarterly. Term invoices are sent four weeks prior to the due date.
- If payment is not received two weeks after the due date, an overdue statement is sent.
- If payment is not received four weeks after the due date, a statement along with a letter from the Business Manager will be sent requesting the account be finalised, or an appointment made to discuss further.
- If payment is not received six weeks after the due date, a second letter is sent inviting the family to make an appointment with the Business Manager.
- If payment is not received or an appointment made, a third letter is sent advising the college may need to refer the matter to debt collection.
- These reminders are followed up by telephone calls from the Business Manager or Fee Liaison Officer.
- In the absence of a response the matter is forwarded to a Collection Agency.

17.2 As the college is not fully funded by the government, it relies on the family fee collection and support from the college community.

17.3 The Business Manager will monitor the payment of fees and make contact with families when they fail to meet their obligations.

18. CONFIDENTIALITY

18.1 All information which is made available to the Principal and Business Manager will be treated in the strictest confidence.