

St Mary's College Gunnedah

SCHOOL FEES AND COLLECTION POLICY



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5.	Contact Officer:	Principal

SCHOOL FEES AND COLLECTION POLICY

RATIONALE

At St Mary's College we aim to be strong and courageous in our actions including supporting our children in accessing the best possible education while including others in our Catholic community that have less capacity to pay. St Mary's School Fees and Collection Policy reflects the mission of the Catholic Church to provide affordable Catholic education to those who seek it and support the Catholic character of our College. The Catholic Church's preferential option for the poor obligates Catholic schools to ensure that no student is denied a Catholic education because of an inability to pay.

DEFINITIONS

- School fees are what the school charges families for the education of their children.
- Camp Levy is a charge for compulsory camp attendance that is encompassed in the Resource Levy.
- Subject Levy is a charge for elective subjects which students have enrolled in.

PRINCIPLES

Responsibility St Mary's College is responsible for setting its own school fees.

Accessibility Catholic schools should be accessible to all Catholic families irrespective of the capacity to pay.

The purpose of these procedures is to assist in the setting of fees and fee remissions that take into account a broad range of considerations, including the principles articulated in this policy.

1. The level at which the fee is set is a matter for the College Executive in consultation with the College Board, giving due weight to the matters raised in this document.
2. The College needs to ensure that the fee level is appropriate and takes into account the socio-economic level of the school community and other relevant factors including the Education Index (Consumer Price Index).
3. A range of approaches may be taken in relation to the granting of fee remissions or fee concessions. However, in the interests of equity and accountability, these processes need to be transparent and communicated appropriately.
4. The Principal will grant an extension of time for payment, only if there are exceptional circumstances outside of the parents'/guardians' control. The College reserves the right to withhold school reports if the fees remain unpaid. This decision would be made after extensive consultation with the financial manager and the Executive.

FAMILIES WITH MORE THAN ONE STUDENT

A Family Fee Structure has been devised to provide a substantial discount for the additional students at the College. This approach may include higher levels of discounts for families with more than two students at the school.

PROCEDURES FOR FEE PAYMENT AND COLLECTION OF UNPAID FEES

The purpose of these procedures is to provide support for the development of strategies related to the payment of fees and the collection of unpaid fees that are consistent, fair and equitable.

The steps to be taken in relation to the payment of fees are as follows:

1. The current Fee Schedule is included in the Enrolment Package and in the Year 7 Welcome Package.
2. St Mary's will make provision for parents/guardians to pay in a number of ways, eg. direct debit, weekly, monthly, per term or yearly direct payment. Three instalments will be billed throughout the year, one at the beginning of the first three terms.
3. Fees at St Mary's College are calculated on a term-by-term basis. When a student commences or leaves part way through a term, the College will invoice for the full term.

The case of parents/guardians who are able but unwilling to pay fees, can be problematic. Such cases are likely to surface only after the child has commenced in the school and parents refuse to meet their financial commitments. Every effort must be made to help those parents understand their obligations. It becomes a matter of justice to other parents and students at the College that they should meet their commitments. The recovery of unpaid fees, particularly if this involves legal action, must be approached compassionately and sensitively to protect the child as much as possible from the public embarrassment that could arise. In addition, all approaches to parents/guardians should be based on appropriate pastoral procedures.

The judgment as to whether parents are unable to pay because of their financial situation must err on the side of leniency, lest the Church be seen by the parents concerned, to be unsympathetic to their situation.

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

For those who fail to keep up with their commitments it is essential the matter be brought to their attention promptly and responses sought.

1. A reminder statement is to be sent to parents/guardians.
2. Follow-up on a personal basis should follow no response to the reminder. This follow-up should be conducted by the Principal, or delegate, in a sensitive, discreet and confidential matter.
3. If this fails, a formal letter from the College should be used to remind parents/guardians of their obligation. This letter should include an invitation to discuss the matter with the College and a specified timeframe for a response.
4. If this course of action is not successful, the College may decide to send a letter seeking payment and outlining the possible actions, including legal action that could occur if payment is not received within the specified timeframe.
5. A letter requesting parents/guardians to meet with the Principal to discuss school fees and collect the student's school report.
6. As a further step, the College may use the services of a debt collector or issue a letter through a solicitor. In pursuing this course of action, agreement must be obtained by the Parish Priest and Principal.
7. As a final step, court proceedings may be initiated but prior approval of the Parish Priest and Principal is required. Under no circumstances can a child enrolled in a school be refused ongoing enrolment because their parents/guardians have not paid fees. For a student to progress to senior school, a formal application is required. The acceptance of that enrolment will take into consideration a number of factors, including payment of prior school fees.

CAMP/EXCURSION REFUND POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Compulsory and non-compulsory school excursions and camps enhance a student's learning by providing opportunities for the student to participate in activities, both curriculum-related and recreational, outside of the normal school routine. All planned school excursions are approved by the College Executive.

Fees for school excursions and camps are provided on a cost recovery only basis, according to the number of student who would be in attendance. Compulsory and non-compulsory school excursions, camps or extra curricular activity require a completed permission form from the parent/guardian and the payment of the fee. Note that payment for compulsory camps are included the Fee Schedule.

RATIONALE

St Mary's College encourages all students to participate in extra curricular activities including compulsory attendance at year level camps. There will be occasions when for whatever reason(s) a student needs to withdraw from an excursion/camp after they have made payment to the College for all or part of that activity.

OUTCOMES

- To provide a fair and equitable refund system.
- To describe the process involved in decisions behind eligibility for refunds.

GUIDELINES

1. Where the College is charged for the provision of a program or service as a bulk cost, no refund is payable.
2. No refund will be payable to the students withdrawing where the College deems the withdrawal was avoidable and the College has incurred the full costs of the camp.
3. Where the withdrawal from an excursion/camp is due to suspension under student discipline procedures, the Principal will determine whether a refund of any type is possible.
4. Where the College makes a decision to cancel an excursion/camp due to insufficient numbers, the amount paid by the students shall be refunded in full.
5. Where a parent withdraws a student from attending a camp for any reason, including medical grounds, and the College has committed and made payments to the provider, a refund can be requested for determination by the Principal. This determination can be in the form of full, partial or no refund due.

ASSOCIATED POLICIES

It is expected that this Policy is read and understood in conjunction with the existing policies and procedures of St Mary's College and the Catholic Schools Office Armidale, including:

- School Accounting Policies and Procedures Manual.

POLICY RESPONSIBILITY

The person responsible for the implementation of this *Policy* is the Principal.

POLICY REVIEW

The Policy shall be reviewed every three years, or in the event of any information, etc. that would demonstrate the need for a review, or resulting from any legislative or organisational change that would warrant a review.