



# Star of the Sea College

## Fees Policy

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Star of the Sea College is a Catholic Independent Girls' school, founded by the Presentation Sisters in 1883. Since 2014, Star of the Sea College has operated under the auspices of Kildare Ministries.

### **RATIONALE**

Star of the Sea College is required to ensure its long-term educational effectiveness and financial viability in ways that reflect the philosophy, mission and goals of Catholic education and Kildare Ministries. The College aims to provide students with exemplary educational opportunities that reflect best practice in teaching and learning and that occur in contemporary and well-resourced facilities. It also aims to ensure that the setting of school fees will take into account the range of the socio economic status of the families the school serves, and, in instances where families experience financial hardship, the College will provide parents with assistance in meeting their obligations to the College.

This policy has particular relevance to the parent community and to prospective parents who are considering enrolling their daughter at Star of the Sea College. It seeks to ensure that the College community has an understanding of the purpose of school fees and that families are aware of their obligations with regard to fees and charges.

### **PURPOSE OF SCHOOL FEES**

Fees for education in a Catholic school are an inbuilt component of the total funding of Catholic education. Fees assist the school to maintain a desired standard of education whilst remaining financially viable.

The College relies on three main sources of income – Australian government grants, State government grants and school fees, with the latter having 2 components – the GENERAL TUITION FEE and CAPITAL FEE and an optional tax deductible Building Fund component.

The College endeavours to ensure that all parents carry costs equitably for both current and future years, however, consistent with the shared mission of the Catholic education and Kildare Ministries, the Principal may give special consideration to families experiencing financial hardship through short term fee relief provided by bursaries or longer term fee relief through financial scholarships.

### **PROCEDURES**

#### **Fee Setting**

- Upon enrolment of a student, a family commits to the payment of the required school fees and charges by signing the Enrolment Agreement Form.
  - The College Board approves the level of fees and charges and these are communicated to families by December each year. In setting the fees, the following factors are taken into account:
    - the provision of a comprehensive curriculum which meets the needs of the students
    - the need to maintain and improve buildings and facilities
    - the ability of families to meet the level of fees and charges
    - the financial viability of the College.
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- In December each year, families are emailed a Fee Pack which includes the College Fee Procedure and Fee Schedule for the following year, along with a Navigation Guide to access the online community portal. Families are required to select and agree to a fee payment option on the portal.
- The College fees are published on the College website.

### Fee Billing

- In February, the Business Office will forward an annual fee statement to each family, which will include an optional tax-deductible building fund donation and an optional tax-deductible Bursary donation.
- A separate account will be sent for the optional Co-curricular Programs, and any non-compulsory events and excursions.

### Fee Collection

- The College has a responsibility to the wider school community to make every reasonable effort to collect fees. These efforts will include offers of various payment arrangements, including additional time.
- Full school fees are payable whether teaching and learning occurs onsite or remotely.
- A limited number of Bursaries are available for those who are suffering short term financial hardship. Families are encouraged to contact the Principal or Business Manager to discuss difficulty in payment of their fees and charges and to ascertain if they are eligible for this short term or longer term assistance. The Bursary Committee will oversee this process.

### Late Fees

Parents/Guardians who fail to contact the Finance Office, when fee instalments fall due will incur a late fee. This late fee is charged at the end of the cycle for missed payments, being \$50 for quarterly and \$20 for monthly instalments.

### Recovery of Outstanding Debts

Penalties apply for accounts in arrears. If an account is in arrears, the College will make contact by letter, email and/or telephone, reminding families of their obligations. If there is no satisfactory response to reminders for payment, or where there is no evidence of hardship and special circumstances cannot be substantiated, the College may:

- notify parents that the student may not be able to participate in extra-curricular activities that incur a levy
- engage a third party external Collection Agency to recover the costs
- consider options for ongoing enrolment of student/s at Star of the Sea College

To avoid this outcome, families are urged to consult with the Principal or the Business Manager.

As a last resort, failure on the part of the College or an external Collection Agency to achieve a satisfactory outcome may lead to the College pursuing legal action. In instances where the College engages an external

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Collection Agency or takes legal action, families will be liable for contingency fees, i.e. collection costs, commissions and the fees and charges of a solicitor.

New enrolments will not be accepted from families who have fees in arrears and who have not entered into an arrangement with the Business Manager.

### **Parental Liability**

At the time of acceptance of enrolment, a student's parent(s) or guardian(s) sign the Enrolment Agreement that incorporates obligations and agreements about the payment of fees.

In a two parent/guardian household, the College expects and requests both parents/guardians to sign the Enrolment Agreement.

Where there is more than one applicant, both signatories to the Enrolment Agreement will be equally responsible jointly and severally for the timely payment of College fees and any other charges regardless of any changes in their circumstances now or in the future.

The College may at times enter into a Fee Variation Agreement with either party or third party, but in doing so, does not relinquish, diminish, or alter in any way that the College may exercise its rights to pursue either party for any outstanding school fees, costs, contingency fees, interest etc, from either party regardless of any payments that have been paid by either party or any third party.

### **Family Law matters**

The Family Law Act is not an act concerned with education, but sometimes matters arising under the Act can impinge on the relationship between the College and its students and/or parents.

Subject to Family Court Orders, both parents have equal parental responsibility in respect of a child. Parents who have joint responsibility can participate equally in all aspects of College life. The College does not take sides in a dispute between parents, nor does it try to settle family disputes over fee payment. The College regards both parents as jointly and severally liable for fees and continues to send one account.

Parenting orders come under three headings:

- Residence Order
- Contact Order
- Specific Issues Order

When faced with a dispute, the College must ask for a copy of the court order and whether a "parenting plan" exists. If a court order specifies a particular school fee payment arrangement, the College will adjust payment responsibilities in accordance with court orders.

### **Period of Absence from the College**

Fee reduction will not be provided for student absence from the College or when there has been some

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disruption to a child's education.

### Student withdrawal from the College

It is a condition of enrolment that a minimum of one term's notice (i.e. 10 weeks) in writing addressed directly to the Principal, is required to advise the College that a student is exiting. In the absence of such notice a term's fees will be charged.

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Principal
<b>Approved By</b>	Chair of the Board
<b>Approved &amp; Commenced</b>	February 2017
<b>Reviewed and updated</b>	29 November 2021
<b>Review By</b>	November 2022
<b>Relevant Legislation</b>	Privacy Act (1988) Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)
<b>Related Policies &amp; Procedures</b>	CEM Policy 2.27- School Fees Bursary Policy Enrolment Policy Privacy Policy Student Behaviour Management Policy Grievance Policy and Procedures Star of the Sea Fees Procedure and Schedule (updated annually)
<b>Version</b>	8 (Fees Policy: Website Version)