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*Lighting the Way through Faith and Learning*

## **DIOCESAN SCHOOL FEE MANAGEMENT POLICY**

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

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#### **SECONDARY & K-12 SCHOOLS, EXCLUDING CORPUS CHRISTI CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL & HOLY SPIRIT COLLEGE**

The following are answers to commonly asked questions in relation to the Diocesan School Fee Management Policy. If further information is required, please do not hesitate to contact your school office.

#### **What is annual billing?**

- All school fees are invoiced at the beginning of the year to provide families with the knowledge of their commitment for the whole year.
- This invoicing includes such items as Tuition, Building Fund/SEDSO, School Based Resource Fees, Course Fees, Excursion, etc.
- There may be some small additional costs charged throughout the year but schools are asked to keep this to a minimum and to fully inform parent/carers if this will occur. These extra costs are generally paid in addition to any regular school fee payment.

#### **What is a 30 day account?**

- School fees accounts are a 30 day account.
- This means 30 days after the date of the invoice you must pay the account in full, if it is not paid it is overdue unless you have provided the school with a **School Fee Agreement**.

#### **What is a School Fee Agreement and why do I need one?**

- A School Fee Agreement is formal advice to the school that your family wishes to access a flexible payment arrangement and pay the account over the school year rather than pay the account in full after 30 days.
- A School Fee Agreement allows you to pay your account by instalments at regular intervals that suit your budget.
- Access to a flexible payment arrangement is only available to those families that intend to pay their account in full within the school year.
- Families who experience hardship and are not able to pay their fees in full are not required to complete this form. **Applications for Fee Concession** are available from the school office for families in these circumstances.

#### **Why do I need to provide an amended School Fee Agreement each year?**

A **new or amended** School Fee Agreement must be submitted each year prior to the expiry of 30 days of when your school fee account is invoiced if you wish to commence or continue a flexible payment arrangement. School fees change annually, so completing an Agreement each year ensures that the school has the following information current for the school year:

- **How often you intend to pay** – eg fortnightly, weekly, etc.
- **How you will pay** – eg BPay, Direct Debit, Centrepay, etc.
- **The amount you will pay** – The amount of your regular payment

Completing a new or amended School Fee Agreement also brings to your attention the need for an amended payment and how much it will be.

### Who needs to sign the School Fee Agreement?

It is sufficient for one parent/carer to sign the Agreement. School Fee Agreements do not replace the contractual agreement for payment on the Enrolment Application.

### How do I know how much I have to pay?

- A **School Fee Calculator** is provided on each school's website to assist you to work it out.
- You will need your annual school fee statement and the date of your first instalment.
- The calculator works out how much your regular payment will be to pay your fees in full by the first Friday in December.
- The calculator will provide a weekly, fortnightly or monthly instalment amount

### How do I change the amount of my current payment?

Completion of a School Fee Agreement **IS NOT** an authority for payments from your Bank Account or Centrelink benefit and the following applies according to your method of payment:

- In the case of **BPay or regular internet banking payments** you must log on to your bank account and make adjustments to your payment.
- In the case of a **Direct Debit**, where the school is taking money from your account, **you must complete an amendment to your Direct Debit Authority**. These forms are available from your school office. The school will lodge the amended authority on your behalf.
- In the case of a **Centrepay Payment**, where Centrelink is making payments on your behalf, **you must complete an amendment to your Centrepay Authority**. These forms are available from your school office. The school will lodge the amended authority with Centrelink on your behalf.

### Why are school fee accounts not split between parents/carers?

- When parents/carers enrol their child/children, all parties enter into a contractual agreement to pay school fees for the time that their child is enrolled at the school. This contract includes payment of school fees under joint and several liability.
- One school fee account allows us to manage your account as one debt in accordance with joint and several liability.
- Under joint and several liability, we are obligated to keep all parties informed of the status of their school fee account. Splitting fees and creating separate accounts with individual school fee statements does not align with this obligation.

### What does joint and several liability mean?

Put simply, joint and several liability means that each person who has signed the Enrolment Application is individually responsible for payment of all school fees and levies regardless of actual fee payer arrangements.

### How can we manage our account when we are separated?

It is an expectation that parents will come to their own arrangements regarding payment of fees. Schools will accept **School Fee Agreements** and therefore two payments, from two parties to an account if necessary. Please note that Child Support and Family Law Court Orders do not obligate schools to split fee accounts.

### Who Do I Speak to if I Can't Afford the Fees?

- In the case of hardship, families are encouraged to seek an **Application for Fee Concession** from the school office.
- On submission of the application with appropriate documentation, an interview with the Principal will generally be made.
- Matters of hardship are treated with respect and in the strictest confidence.

### **What is an Application for Fee Concession?**

- These applications are a formal way of applying for consideration in relation to hardship.
- They provide information and evidence to support your claim so that consideration may be given to such concessions as reduced payments, extensions of time or reduction in school fees.
- Fee concessions are reviewed annually and applications will be required to provide up to date financial information.
- In the case of families attending more than one school, schools may share this information so that assistance can be considered across schools.
- Concessions granted are generally based on your capacity to pay rather than set discounts.

### **Why do you need my personal and financial information?**

Fee Concession consideration is a financial decision requiring financial information. Therefore, there are certain things we ask you to commit to providing in order for us to consider your request for hardship assistance:

- We ask that you complete an Application for Fee Concession and provide us with the reason/s that are the cause of your hardship;
- We ask that you provide personal and financial documentation to assist us make sound financial decisions that will have the right outcome for your family;
- We ask that you work with us, and respond to reasonable requests we make both verbally and in writing to you for further information and/or documentation;
- We ask that you attend an interview with the Principal to discuss your situation;
- We are unable to consider your Application unless this information is supplied.

### **Why do I need to have an annual review of my school fee concession?**

- School fees are invoiced annual and therefore your commitment changes each year.
- There is also the possibility that your family's situation has changed.
- Fee Concessions decisions must be made on current information.

### **What are School Fee Clearances?**

- School Fee Clearances are a means of having families who do not address the issue of outstanding fees, do so by offering their child/children conditional enrolment on transfer of one school to another.
- Schools will consult with each other in this regard upon receiving Enrolment Applications.
- Once an arrangement is made with the child/children's previous school the condition is generally removed.