

Global Fees Policy



INTRODUCTION

The Catholic Church's preferential option for the poor obligates Catholic schools to ensure that no baptised Catholic student is denied a Catholic education because of a family's inability to pay school fees.

"Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society."

- Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Encyclical Letter, 187

In recognition of the differential capacity of families to contribute to the costs of education, both the Australian and State Governments incorporate needs-based elements into their recurrent funding of the Catholic school system.

The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd. (CECV) policy for allocating funding to Catholic schools also accounts for need in that, all other factors being equal, schools in lower socio-economic areas receive more funding than those in higher socio-economic areas. Also, schools are provided with additional financial assistance for each student of a family who holds an eligible, means-tested Health Care Card (HCC) or Pensioner Concession Card (PCC) which enables the school to offer fee concessions.

This School Fees Policy of the Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Sale (CEO Sale) acknowledges the significant contribution that individual schools make to the costs of education, through the generation of private income that includes the payment of fees by families. In recognising the role of schools in this area, and in supporting the principle of accessibility of Catholic schools through its needs-based funding formula, CEO Sale encourages school communities to establish fee setting, collection, concession and debt recovery practices that are consistent with access and equity priorities.

Purpose:

This policy outlines the process by which Lavallo Catholic College will set and collect fees, provide concessions to families experiencing financial hardship and pursue recovery of unpaid fees.

Lavallo Catholic College will provide a consistent approach as per CEO Sale guidelines across the Diocese to school fee setting, fee collection, fee concessions and fee debt recovery.

This policy acknowledges the need for schools to charge and collect fees and for families to meet their fee obligations with regard to their capacity to pay.

Principles:

This policy is embedded in the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and, in particular, 'The Dignity of the Human Person', 'Preferential Option for the Poor' and 'The Common Good'.

Dignity of the Human Person: Processes for the collection of school fees, granting of fee concessions and recovery of unpaid school fees need to be transparent, fair and just.

Preferential Option for the Poor: Catholic schools should be accessible to all Catholic families irrespective of capacity to pay.

The Common Good: Each Catholic school is responsible for setting its own fees taking into consideration both the private income needing to be raised and the capacity of their families to pay

SETTING OF FEES

The College Fee is a Global Fee set in the previous year taking into consideration the following factors:-

1. The present level of fees;
 2. The Educational Consumer Price Index;
 3. The level of economic growth in the area;
 4. The increasing demands for funds as a result of loans or curriculum development.
- As a Catholic school we are obliged to set fees according to criteria that represent a thorough and transparent assessment of the internal and external factors influencing costs and the ability of families to pay.
 - The operation of a school is subject to complex regulation regarding its registration with the Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority (VRQA), charitable status and government funding eligibility. These, amongst other things, impose important restrictions on how the school applies income generated from its conduct, including school fees.
 - Fees and their payment are discussed with parents at the time of enrolment. Relevant fee policies and guidelines are made available at that time.
 - Before the commencement of a new school year, all school fees and other charges should be reviewed and approved in writing, by the Canonical Administrator (Marist Schools Australia, MSA), unless delegated in writing to the Principal.
 - Full Fee Paying Overseas Students (FFPOS) are required to be charged full fees for the cost of their education as they do not attract government funding.
 - The Global Fee Structure does provide a discount for families with more than one student at the school.
 - Where a School Building Fund exists, schools may encourage contributions to the school building fund. It is important, however, that donations to the school building fund be a 'gift' in that they are freely given and do not provide any benefit to the donor. If a school imposes a mandatory contribution to the school building fund or payment of the same will entitle the parent to some discount to the school fees, it will not be a donation or a gift, and the school must make it clear to parents that the contribution to the school building fund levy will not be tax deductible.

NOTIFICATION OF PARENTS

There is a clear statement of College Fees in the Prospectus and Enrolment Documents. The Fees are adjusted on an annual basis and notification of that adjustment is sent to parents prior to the end of the year. In all statements there is a clear requirement that Fees be paid in full and parents sign a Fees Agreement Form. This document is the basis for collecting fees.

ENROLMENT PROCEDURES

The Fees Agreement is a clear indication by the parents that fees can be met without assistance and enrolment can only be confirmed after receipt of this document.

An administration fee is required upon enrolment and is non-refundable.

GLOBAL FEE

Lavalla Catholic College offers a **two tiered Global Tuition Fee** that is designed to simplify families' budgets. School fees are under a two tiered system, Years 7 -9 Tuition, and Years 10-12 tuition, which differentiates the cost of education relative to each campus and its educational program.

What is covered under this Global Fee?

ALL charges relating to the delivery of education such as materials fees, VETIS, VCAL, Year level Camps & retreats.

Registered Training Organisation Lavalla Catholic College NAT.Code 20669

Lavalla Catholic College is an RTO and as such charges fees for VETIS subjects (both on campus & off campus courses) under its Global Fee policy. The College doesn't charge a separate fee for VETIS units. Costs associated with the delivery of VETIS subjects (both on campus & off campus courses) are incorporated within the college budget and includes course fees, administration fees, material fees, and any other course charges. The budget also incorporates fee income for VETIS subjects from Government Funding allocated through the Victorian Grants Commission of the Victorian Catholic Education Commission of Victoria.

Refunds to students only apply if a student should exit the College before the end of the 3rd term.

It should also be noted that remission of the Global Fee does apply to VETIS subjects in accordance with the remission policy guidelines.

What is NOT covered in the Global fee?

Any **supplementary** activities such as music camps, private music lessons, Marist sporting carnivals, Ski Trips, overseas trips e.g. Italy, Fiji etc.

These activities are to be funded by families separately. **Supplementary** activities are voluntary in nature and not compulsory and do not form part of the curriculum delivery or assessment.

In order for students to be eligible for these activities families must be on a payment plan and financially viable with their Global Fee commitments. Student's receiving remission will not be eligible to attend supplementary activities.

PAYMENT OF FEES

The **Global Fee** is charged as at the 1st January each year and are sent out before the end of the current year.

THE METHOD PAYMENT

The College accepts various methods of payment based on an agreed payment plan.

- Direct Debit or BPay payments (weekly, Fortnightly or monthly)
- Credit Card Monthly
- Other regular payments as agreed

If you have not committed to one of the above payment plans, then 3 equal payments, on the 31st March, 30th & 31st October each year, will automatically apply.

FAMILY FEE DISCOUNT

Fee Discounts apply as per College Global fees and Charges brochure for and are indexed to CPI.

FEE DISCOUNT AS A RESULT OF STUDENTS ARRIVING LATE OR LEAVING PERMANENTLY

Fees are discount and adjusted between terms 1-3 on a pro-rata basis. No discount is applicable to term 4 unless a student has been enrolled.

FEE DISCOUNT AS A RESULT OF INTERRUPTED STUDIES

Fees are not discounted on a pro-rata basis. Some residual amount is required. This payment covers some of the costs already incurred and maintains the student's place in the school.

If a student is absent for more than two terms, a special holding fee of \$200 plus 50% of the Global fee is necessary to keep the place for that student.

If a student is to be absent for one whole term, the Global fee is reduced by 25% provided that at least one month's notice is given for reasons other than sickness.

If a student is absent for seven or more weeks within a term or across two terms, a reduction of 15% is made on global fee, provided that one month's notice is given for reasons other than sickness.

CHILD CUSTODY SITUATIONS

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.

Amendments to the Family Law Act in 1996 abolish the terms “custody”, “guardianship” and “access”. The emphasis is now on parental responsibility, which can be exercised separately by both parents. Subject to Family Court Orders, both parents have equal parental responsibility in respect of a child. The College does not take sides in a dispute between parents, nor does it try to settle family disputes over fee payment. The College therefore regards both parents as jointly liable for fees and continues to send one account.

Parenting orders now 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.

Parents who have joint responsibility can participate in all aspects of College life.

The College regards both parents jointly liable for fees and continues to send one account. On receipt of the relevant “Parent Order or Parenting Plan”, the College will arrange to send the account to the nominated parent who will then arrange for whatever re-imburement is required of the other parent.

LAVALLA CATHOLIC COLLEGE FEE COMMITTEE

The Fees Committee meets regularly to review matters associated with Fee Collection and matters referred to it by the Finance Officer and Director of Business and Administration . It views a list of debtors and identifies appropriate action, fee relief applications including recommended write offs of bad debts. The Committee consists of the Principal, Director of Business and Administration, Finance Officer, Parish Priest, and two Advisory Council parent representatives.

FEE RELIEF

Parents can apply for fee relief due to financial hardship and can request a reduction of fees, or a delay in payment.

The College considers the range of government allowances that may be available to parents in assisting them in financing the costs of education. However, if parents can provide reasonable verification of the hardship, the College is prepared to maintain the enrolment of the student and to come to some clear arrangement concerning fee relief. All applications are reviewed each year as circumstances can change from one year to the next.

ARRANGEMENTS AND PROCEDURES FOR FAMILIES SEEKING FEE RELIEF

All but a few parents normally pay the full College Global fee in due time. In fairness to those parents who make the effort to pay, the College insists and takes measures to ensure that the burden of school fees is shared equally among the parents.

CRITERIA FOR THE DETERMINATION OF HARDSHIP

(No information is passed to the College from the Primary Schools unless parents have requested this)

1. The eligibility for Health Care Card.
2. Assessment of Assets ie: car, caravan, investment.
3. Net Family Assessable Income as per individual Income Tax Return.
4. Employment or whether one or both parents are seriously ill.
5. Number and Year Level of School Age Children.
6. Other unexpected costs and other cost demands and activities.
7. Situation with regard to mortgages, loans and debts.
8. Whether the parent is in receipt of Government monies.

Variation of Fee Agreement

Variation of Agreement is to be granted only after a Fee Remission Application has been received and approved by the Fees Committee.

Recovery of Unpaid Fees

- All families are expected to meet their school fee obligations.
- Where parents who have the financial means, refuse to pay school fees, every effort must be made to help them understand their obligations and the impact that non-payment has on the school's ability to provide a quality education for all students.
- It is a matter of justice to all families that all available steps are taken to ensure that school fees are paid.
- The recovery of unpaid fees must be approached pastorally, compassionately and sensitively, to protect the student as much as possible from the public embarrassment that could arise.
- At all times in the recovery of unpaid fees, Canonical Administrator should be kept informed.
- After all other measures to recover unpaid fees have been exhausted, legal proceedings may be considered.
- The written approval of the Director and the Bishop, Diocese of Sale, must be obtained before any court action is initiated.
- The judgment as to whether parents are unable to pay because of their financial situation must err on the side of leniency.
- Schools should make every effort to monitor and manage school fee payments to avoid school fee debt accumulating.