

**MACLEAY VALLEY PARISH
SCHOOL FEE COLLECTION POLICY & PROCEDURE**

VALUES

The values which inform this policy are:

- * Justice
- * Equality
- * Trust
- * Commitment to those with special needs
- * Concern for the pastoral well being of all
- * Promotion of community

ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT SCHOOL FEES

As a Catholic Parish, both St Joseph's Primary and St Paul's College income is received from Government grants, school fees and fundraising by the Parent and Friend community established within each school.

The level of fees charged must be sufficient to support the educational program of the schools.

Those responsible for the setting of school fees will be sensitive to the financial constraints upon families wishing to send their children to Macleay Valley Parish Schools.

POLICY

The following policy must be interpreted in the light of Macleay Valley Parish Schools Vision and Mission Statement and read in conjunction with the Enrolment Policy.

Therefore, in implementing this policy, the School Principals and the Parish Finance Committee have a degree of discretion. Given the assumptions about school fees, it is the policy of the schools that:

1. School fees will be charged for each student enrolled, as well as a school services levy charged per family. At the time of enrolment, families will be made aware of the Parish School Fee Policy which will be available on both St Joseph's Primary and St Paul's College websites.
2. The level of school fees will be reviewed annually by the Parish Finance Committee taking into account the financial needs of the schools and the ability of the school community to meet these fees.
3. A discount will be granted to all families who have three or more students enrolled at Macleay Valley Parish Schools.
4. A discount will be granted to all families who pay annual fees up-front i.e. by the due date which has been established to coincide with Term 1 due date.
5. **Fee concessions will be granted according to need but there is an expectation that a minimum contribution would be made by all. Fee concessions are reviewed annually. The School Principal, assisted by the Parish Accounts Manager, is authorised to grant school fee concessions to families in need (refer to Section 4 of this Policy). The number and level of such concessions shall be reported to the Parish Finance Committee but the names of families receiving such concessions shall be confidential to the Principal, Parish Priest, Parish Accounts Manager and Chairperson of the Board, unless in an extraordinary circumstance the Committee determines otherwise.**
6. Access is not denied to students because of a serious cause of inability to pay school fees.

7. Outstanding school fees will be pursued as a matter of justice to other parents, which may result in the debt being referred to a Debt Collection Agency. **The debtor will then be liable for all collection costs and any associated fees & interest involved in the recovery of the debt.**

8. Parents need to be aware that non payment of fees will impact on the potential of a student's involvement in the co-curricular program of the schools.

9. Legal procedures to recover outstanding fees may not be instituted without the express permission of the Parish Priest and Finance Committee.

CONSEQUENCES

This policy will be used to guide the annual decision as to the level of school fees charged and the determining of levies. At the time of enrolling their child or children, parents / guardians will be made aware of the obligation to pay school fees regularly and will be required to sign an undertaking to do so. Families will have access to the Macleay Valley Parish School Fee Policy (available on each School's web site).

Normally, eligibility for fee concession should be formally sought with adequate supporting financial information (refer to section 4 of this Policy).

However, in some circumstances, it may be appropriate for the school to take initiative to offer a fee concession, e.g. sudden death of family breadwinner. The decision of the school regarding eligibility for fee concession shall always be conveyed in writing. When a parent has difficulty paying school fees, this will be treated with discretion and confidentiality on a one-to-one basis with the parent and the principal or his delegate.

The method of billing school fees will be designed to facilitate the schools cash flow and to assist parents in meeting their commitment to pay fees.

In pursuing payment of outstanding fees, the Parish will undertake whatever steps are necessary to ascertain the family's ability to meet the debt and then if necessary, and with the Parish Finance Committee approval, take legal steps to recover the money owed to the Parish. **The debtor will then be liable for all collection costs and any associated fees & interest involved in the recovery of the debt.**

PROCEDURES

1. Setting of School Fees

The Parish Board will determine the level of school fees (tuition and levies) and family discount based on budget estimates provided to meet the needs of Macleay Valley Parish Schools for the following year. In the final term of the school year, parents will be advised of the school fees for the following year.

2. Billing and Method of Payment Fee Arrangements:

- * Annually in advance (the first account of the year will show the total annual fees, taking into consideration the 5% discount for paying up front).
- * Due Date of each account (three instalments).
- * Instalments by Direct Debit: weekly, fortnightly, monthly.
- * Instalments by BPAY, cheque, credit card and cash (weekly, fortnightly, monthly).

It is the expectation of the Parish Office and Schools that these arrangements will be honoured.

The yearly fees are charged over three accounts. One account is sent early February, the second in April and the third in July and the due date is generally 3 weeks later. Anyone experiencing difficulties with fees is encouraged to contact the Parish Accounts Manager to discuss the situation.

Methods of Payment:

Accounts may be paid by:

* **Direct Debits:** THIS IS THE PREFERRED METHOD OF PAYMENT OF SCHOOL FEES. This is to be organised through the Parish Office at 52-58 Marsh Street West Kempsey. A form must be completed in order to process regular payments directly from your bank account.

* **Cash, Cheque or EFTPOS** facility at reception of Parish Office, St Joseph's Primary School and St Paul's College during office hours (9.00am . 3.30pm)

* **Cheque through the mail:** Cheques are payable to Kempsey School Fees and mailed to PO Box 3007, West Kempsey NSW 2440.

* **BPAY** . contact your bank, credit union or building society to make this payment from your cheque, savings or credit card account. Please quote biller code and your reference number (as printed on MACLEAY VALLEY PARISH OFFICE STATEMENTS).

Exit Procedures:

When a student leaves the schools it is the parent's responsibility to notify the schools in writing. The Parish office will complete a Fee Account on Exit form which will state fees payable or refundable. Without notification the student will continue to receive tuition fees.

COLLEGE FEE PAYABLE / REFUND POLICY

If a student leaves within any week of Terms 1,2,3 and 4 a Fee Adjustment will be made against the Schools Fee Account. If the School Fees relating to the student are in credit a refund will be provided to the family upon the family writing a letter requesting the refund.

Fee Collection Procedure:

It is the obligation and responsibility of parents to contact the Parish Accounts Manager if payments cannot be made as per the fee paying arrangement form. If fees become overdue, the Parish will take the necessary steps (refer to Section 3 of this Policy) to follow up the debt.

3. Non Payment of Fees

In the case of a student currently at Macleay Valley Parish Schools, the procedure will be:

- i. Initial follow up will be made two weeks after the due date of the account payment, regardless of the payment arrangement.
- ii. The initial follow-up shall be an account rendered or telephone call by the Parish Accounts Manager.
- iii. If no contact has been made with the Parish Accounts Manager within seven days after the initial follow up, a letter will be sent requesting either payment or contact be made with the Parish Accounts Manager to discuss the matter (letter 1).
- iv. If after a further seven days the parents have taken no action, a second letter (from the Parish Accounts Manager) will be sent requesting payment or an appointment within seven days (letter 2).

v. If there is no response to this letter the Parish Accounts Manager will attempt to ring the parents to discuss the matter.

vi. If the parents cannot be contacted to make an arrangement, or make an arrangement that is not kept, a letter from the Principal will be sent requesting payment or an appointment, within seven days, to discuss the outstanding account (letter 3).

vii. If the parents do not make an appointment to meet with the Principal to discuss the matter, they will be informed that their debt would not be allowed to increase and that they will be required to pay all account arrears (letter 4). The Principal may also send the student/s home (accompanied by Letter 4), explaining that the student/s may not return to the schools until the parents have met with the Principal. This meeting will be held in the presence of another staff member. A written record will be kept of the meetings with both students and parents. Failure to respond to letter 4 will result in parents being requested to pay all arrears and a full term's fees (10 weeks) in advance.

viii. If the parents do not contact the Parish Accounts Manager within seven days after letter 4, or make an arrangement that is not kept, the Principal, with the approval of the Parish Finance Committee, will write (by certified mail) to the parents and inform them that their child/ren is/are education at the school will be longer enrolled at the school (letter 5). **The account may also be handed to a collection agency for recovery and the debtor will then be liable for all collection costs and any associated fees & interest involved in the recovery of the debt.**

In the case of a student who has departed Macleay Valley Parish Schools:

At the time of leaving Macleay Valley Parish Schools, the parents will be notified of the outstanding fees, via the Fee Account on Exit advice. If, after two weeks of leaving Macleay Valley Parish Schools the outstanding fees have not been paid, a letter will be sent by the Parish Accounts Manager requesting parents to settle the account, and informing them that **if there is no response or satisfactory arrangement entered into to pay the outstanding fees, the account will be handed to a collection agency.**

The debtor will then be liable for all collection costs and any associated fees & interest involved in the recovery of the debt. At all times, the Parish will ensure that people suffering financial hardship are given due consideration. Outstanding accounts will not be passed to a collection agency unless the Parish can demonstrate a long period of attempting to contact the parents to negotiate the payment of the account. It is only after a family has demonstrated that it is not prepared to either honour an arrangement entered into for the payment of fees, or refuses to attend any meeting to discuss the payment of fees, that the matter will be handed to a collection agency. Before this happens, the family concerned will be discussed at the Finance Committee meeting and approval sought, and, if appropriate, the Parish Priest in whose parish the family resides will be notified and asked if he was aware of any extenuating circumstance.

4. Fee Concession

A formal application process is required for arriving at a decision to grant a fee concession.

The following criteria will be considered:

*** Total family income (supported by Tax Returns)**

*** Family size**

*** Other educational institutions to which the family has commitments**

*** Availability of discounts at other educational institutions**

*** Availability of Government assistance to parents**

*** Other extraordinary family commitments.**

In the final determination of a fee concession, consideration will be given both to the need for an actual concession in the amount of money to be paid to Macleay Valley Parish Schools, and the need to spread the payment over an appropriate time. Fee concession is reviewed annually.

This Policy will be implemented in accordance with existing privacy legislation and related policies.