

APPLICABLE TO	Catholic Schools Office and diocesan schools		
DOCUMENT OWNER	Director of Schools		
APPROVAL DATE	February 2021		
APPROVED BY	CSO Leadership Team		
LAST REVIEW DATE/S	May 2016, June 2017	NEXT REVIEW DATE	December 2024
RELATED DOCUMENTS	Debt Collection Procedure 2018 Enrolment Policy 2018 Financial Legislative and Regulatory Requirements Guidelines School Fees Policy 2021		

Purpose

The procedures outlined in this document have been developed to support the Catholic Schools Office School Fees Policy.

In particular, these procedures outline steps to be followed in relation to the collection of school fees.

Scope

These procedures apply to the Catholic Schools Office and all Diocesan schools.

Responsibilities

Director of Schools

The Director of Schools is responsible for communicating these procedures to the Catholic Schools Office Leadership Team and Diocesan School Principals.

The Director of Schools is also responsible for ensuring that these procedures are reviewed as required.

Senior Finance Manager

The Senior Finance Manager is responsible for ensuring that the administrative activities of the Finance Team and advice provided to Diocesan School Principals in relation to the collection of school fees is consistent with these procedures.

School Principals

School Principals are responsible for ensuring that all school-based activities in relation to the collection of school fees are consistent with these procedures.

Step by Step

1. COLLECTION OF SCHOOL FEES

Diocesan schools are expected to follow the steps outlined below in relation to the collection of school fees.

A flowchart of the fee collection process is provided as Appendix 1 of these procedures.

- 1.1 School fee structure and payment processes should be discussed with parents/carers at the time of enrolment.

Parents/carers are to be issued with current information regarding fee types, billing rates and payment options.

- 1.2 Parents/carers of students attending Diocesan schools should be provided with updated information regarding school fees rates and processes by November of each year in preparation for the following year.
- 1.3 Recurrent school fees including Tuition Fees, Diocesan Family School Building Levy and General Resources – Service Fees, and any other charges known in advance such as significant excursions, will be billed annually in Term 1 of the school year.

Where possible, all charges should be included on the invoice to reduce the administrative overhead that would be required for separate billing, collection, counting, receipting and reconciliation.

- 1.4 While a clearly defined, regular school fees payment cycle is the preferred option, schools should ensure that parents/carers are able to pay fees with a minimum of difficulty.

To this end, schools are to make provisions for fees to be paid in a number of ways including direct debit, weekly, monthly, termly or yearly.

- 1.5 School fee accounts are to be sent to parents/carers as early as possible in Term 1 and preferably no later than the end of week 4.

Various payment frequency options are available to suit parents/carers with the aim of having all fees paid in full by the commencement of Term 4.

It is recommended that a reminder regarding payment of school fees be placed in school newsletters at the beginning of each term.

2. PROCEDURES FOR THE RECOVERY OF OVERDUE OR UNPAID FEES

Overdue or unpaid school fees can present significant challenges for Diocesan schools.

While it is expected that parents/carers meet their financial obligations to pay fees and that schools meet their obligations to sound financial management practices, it is also expected that the recovery of unpaid fees will be pursued giving due regard to individual circumstances and the principles that underpin this policy.

It is expected that the first reminder that a school fees account is overdue will be a telephone call from the school to the parent/carer, if the fees are in arrears according to nominated payment frequency. This may result in a direct debit arrangement being established to ensure continuance of enrolment.

The following steps are to be taken in relation to the collection of fees that remain unpaid after initial telephone contact.

- 2.1 A formal notification of overdue school fees account should be sent to parents/carers if payment has not been received after the initial telephone call and within 30 days of the initial account.

Notification should include a letter signed by the School Principal or Designated Person outlining a requirement to make payment within 7 days and offering an opportunity to meet, and a copy of the initial school fees statement.

A sample letter is included as Appendix 2 to these procedures.

- 2.2 If school fees remain unpaid after 2.1 above, and no attempt has been made by parents/carers to settle the outstanding account or make contact with the school, a second letter should be sent under the Principal's or Designated Person's signature, seeking immediate payment and outlining possible actions, including referral of the matter to the Senior Finance Manager at the Catholic Schools Office.

A sample letter for this step is included as Appendix 3 to these procedures.

- 2.3 If school fees remain unpaid after 2.2 above, and no attempt has been made by parents/carers to settle the outstanding account or make contact with the school 7 days after the date of the letter, a third letter should be sent, under the Principal's or Designated Person's signature, informing parents/carers that the matter has been referred to the Senior Finance Manager at the Catholic Schools Office.

A sample letter for this step is included as Appendix 4 to these procedures.

- 2.4 Schools must advise the Senior Finance Manager if payment has not been made after 7 days of the third letter being sent, as per 2.3 above.

Advice to the Senior Finance Manager should include details of all steps taken to recover the outstanding fees.

The Senior Finance Manager will issue a letter to parents/carers on behalf of the Director of Schools seeking payment of the outstanding account and notifying that the Catholic Schools Office may appoint a debt collection agency to pursue the matter if no response is received.

- 2.5 In circumstances where a debt collection agency is engaged to recover unpaid school fees the Catholic Schools Office will:

- Advise the Director of Schools and the School Principal or Designated Person
- Ensure the process and procedures for collection of the fees as outlined in this policy has been followed
- Confirm that the school has attempted to make phone contact with the parents/carers
- Consult with the parish priest if necessary or appropriate

3. FEE MANAGEMENT OFFICER

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle has a dedicated Fee Management Officer to assist all parents/carers with their school fee responsibilities. The Fee Management Officer will liaise with parents/carers in a compassionate, confidential manner to ensure support is available to fulfil fee obligations.

4. FEE CLEARANCE

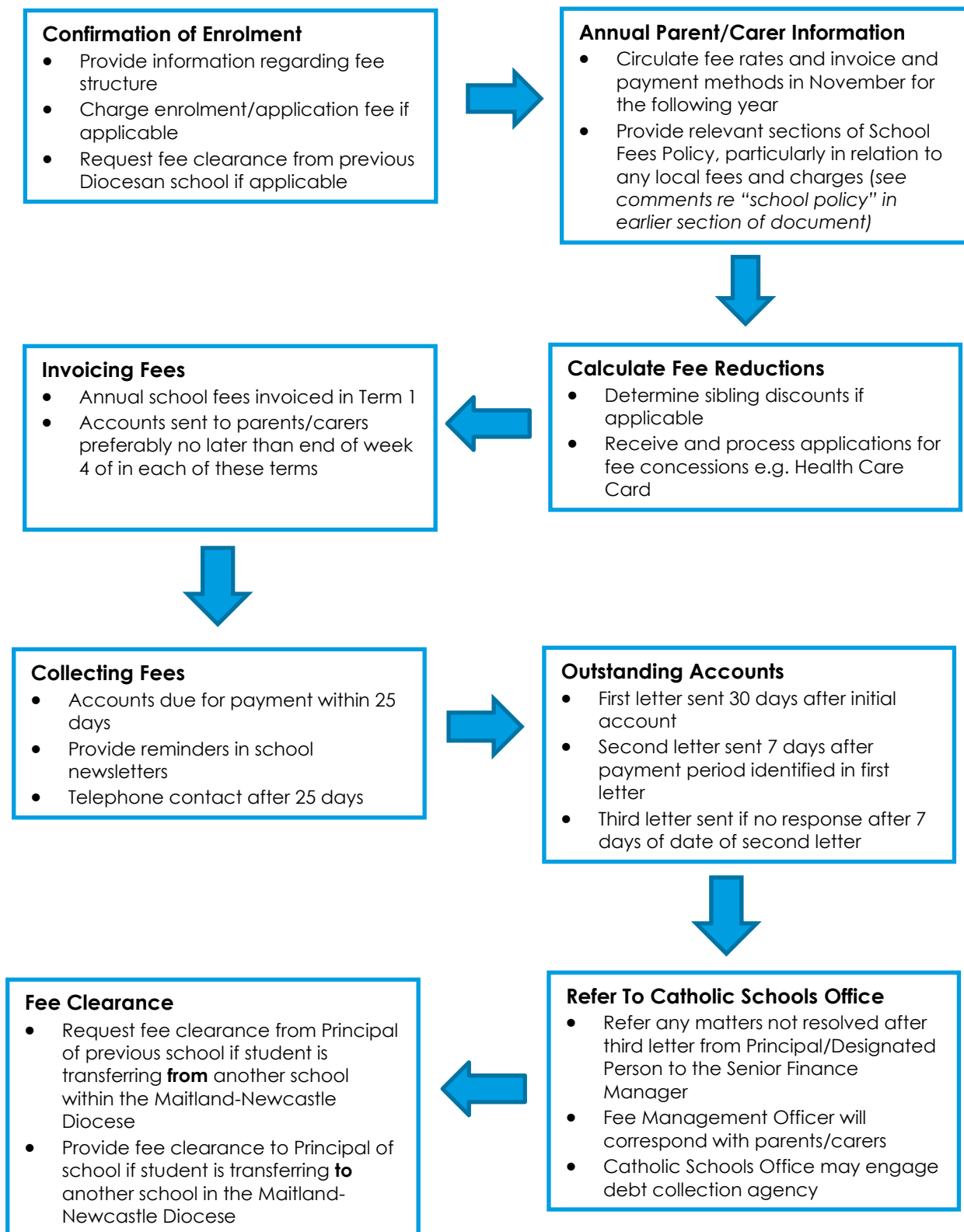
Finalisation of school fee payments to Diocesan schools is a condition of enrolment in any other school within the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese.

To this end, School Principals should seek, and be provided with, a fee clearance prior to finalising a student's enrolment, if they have previously attended another school in the Diocese. The fee clearance request should be made directly from school to school.

Parents/carers of students progressing from infants to primary schools or primary schools to secondary schools within the Diocese should be informed well in advance of enrolment finalisation if there is a pending matter of non-payment of school fees that could negatively impact on the enrolment proceeding.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1: PROCEDURE FOR INVOICING AND COLLECTING SCHOOL FEES



APPENDIX 2: LETTER TO PARENTS/CARERS IF FEES UNPAID AFTER 25 DAYS

(to be printed on school letterhead and sent under Principal signature and printed)

(insert date)

Name
Address
Address

Dear

RE: School Fees Account

Our records show that school fees for (insert name/s of children) have not been paid in accordance with the School Fees Payment Frequency Form that you signed (please see attached). **(Schools please ensure you attach a copy of their signed form so they see what information we are relying on to chase the overdue payment).**

Under this payment Frequency the amount required to bring the account back inside Terms is \$_____.

We would appreciate a call back regarding this matter and either our Finance Officer (insert Finance Officer's Name) or myself look forward to taking your call.

Assuring you of our best intentions at all times.

Yours sincerely

.....
(insert name of Principal/Designated Person)

Inc. School Fees Statement

APPENDIX 3: LETTER TO PARENTS/CARERS IF FEES UNPAID AFTER FIRST LETTER

(to be printed on school letterhead and sent under Principal signature and printed)

(insert date)

Name
Address
Address

Dear

RE: School Fees Account

I refer to our earlier correspondence dated *(insert date of first letter)* regarding missed payments to the account in accordance with the School Fees Payment Frequency Form(copy attached).

I do require a call back from yourself(ves) to establish the reason that the payments are no longer being made in accordance with your elected repayment plan.

Please attend to this by return as school fees are a fee for service.

If your circumstances have changed and you are experiencing difficulty in making these payments at present due to loss of employment, bereavement or ill-health please make an appointment to meet with me at your earliest convenience so that satisfactory arrangements can be made to support you.

We sincerely look forward to taking your call.

Yours sincerely

.....
(insert name of Principal/Designated Person)

APPENDIX 4: LETTER TO PARENTS/CARERS IF FEES UNPAID AFTER SECOND LETTER

(to be printed on school letterhead and sent under Principal signature and printed)

(insert date)

Name
Address
Address

Dear

RE: School Fees Account

We regret to note that both of our attempts to reach out to you in a purposeful manner have not been successful.

The school accepts its obligation to support families with limited financial resources who desire a Catholic education for their children and is able to negotiate suitable fee arrangements with these families. However, when such situations arise, it is the responsibility of parents/carers to contact the school to request a meeting to discuss the required arrangements.

As you have not paid the outstanding school fees nor made a suitable arrangement with the school, I have been left with no option but to refer this matter to the Senior Finance Manager at the Catholic Schools Office for further action.

Regrettably, this can sometimes lead to Legal Recovery Proceedings being raised against you and further costs being added to your account.

We trust that this will not be necessary and urge you to contact us by close of school tomorrow.

No further notice or reference will be given.

Yours sincerely

.....
(insert name of Principal/Designated Person)