

Fees Policy

RATIONALE

At OLSH College we are committed to providing high quality educational opportunities that encourage our students to 'believe and achieve'. We are also committed to providing students with contemporary and well resourced facilities that support and enhance their learning and wellbeing. To uphold these commitments, OLSH relies on three main sources of income – Australian Government grants, State Government grants and school fees.

The Board of OLSH College is required to ensure the long-term educational effectiveness and financial viability of the College in ways that reflect the philosophy, mission and goals of Catholic education and the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. The College operates on a not-for-profit basis, which means that all monies received contribute to operational costs and the ongoing maintenance, refurbishment and provision of new facilities.

In setting school fees, the Board takes into account the socio-economic status of the families the school serves. In instances where families experience financial hardship, the College provides 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 OLSH College. It outlines the principles that underpin the College's approach to the setting and collection of fees. It also outlines procedures pertaining to fee collection schedules, payment options and the recovery of unpaid fees. The policy seeks to ensure that families are aware of their obligations with regard to fees.

PRINCIPLES

- School 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.
- School fees at OLSH College comprise two components – the **General Tuition Fee** and the **Building Levy component**. The College is reliant on both components of the fees structure if it is to continue to deliver a quality education and maintain and improve facilities.
- The College seeks a positive and co-operative partnership with parent(s)/guardian(s). In accepting an offer of enrolment at the College and in continuing this enrolment over successive years, parent(s)/guardian(s) are consciously making a commitment to honour their annual financial obligations to the College.

- The non-payment of tuition fees has a significant impact on the day-to-day running and operational costs of the College, including teacher salaries, curriculum delivery and the provision of extra-curriculum activities. The non-payment of the building levy has a significant impact on the College's ability to complete, planned maintenance and ongoing improvements to facilities.
- The College has a responsibility to ensure that all parents carry costs equitably for upholding the school's educational effectiveness and financial viability. In certain circumstances, consistent with the shared mission of the Catholic education and the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, the Principal may give special consideration to parent(s)/guardian(s) experiencing financial hardship.
- Fee collection procedures will make provision for payment options to assist parent(s)/guardian(s) to meet their financial obligations. Annual fee schedules will be issued with as much lead time as possible to enable parent(s)/guardian(s) to meet their commitments.
- Procedures for the collection of outstanding school fees will be enacted when parent(s)/guardian(s) who appear to have the capacity to pay refuse to do so, or when parent(s)/guardian(s) consistently refuse to engage in good faith in discussions regarding their payment of fees.

PROCEDURES

Fee Setting

The Finance Committee of the College Board reviews the fee schedule each year as part of the annual budget process. The College Board considers the fees recommendation of the Finance Committee and approves fees for the succeeding year. Families can expect advice in November of the fee levels for the succeeding year.

In setting fees, the following factors are taken into account:

- the provision of a comprehensive curriculum which meets the needs of students;
- staffing levels and salaries;
- the need to maintain and improve buildings and facilities;
- the socio-economic status of the families the school serves;
- the financial viability of the College.

Fee Components

Tuition fees. These cover costs for all compulsory core curriculum activities, including camps, excursions and retreats, as well as costs for equipment, ICT provision and services, consumable materials and resources supplied for all subjects. The annual fee also incorporates a re-enrolment cost (administration).

Special subject fees. These apply to private music and singing lessons, Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses, non-compulsory excursions and trips, and other non-compulsory activities and items. These fees are not included in the annual composite fees. They are billed separately and are payable when billed.

Building levy. This is essential for ongoing facilities' improvements and capital works.

Fee Billing and Collection

The College Business Manager administers the billing and collection of fees. In January, the Business Office forwards an annual fee statement to each family.

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 but not limited to:

- Full fees paid monthly in 8 equal instalments, from March until October each year;
- Full fees paid fortnightly in 18 equal instalments, from February until October each year.

A direct debit arrangement from a specified bank account or credit card is the College's preferred payment arrangement with families.

All outstanding accounts are expected to be finalised by the end of October each year.

As noted above, fees for VET, Music tuition and other non-compulsory programs, events and excursions are NOT included in the periodic direct debit deductions, and are due when billed.

New Enrolment Fees

Families applying for enrolment at OLSH College are required to pay an Enrolment Application Fee (\$100 in 2021). This is payable at the time of formal application and is not refundable.

An Enrolment Acceptance and a Bond payment (\$300 and \$500 respectively in 2021) are payable in the year preceding a student's enrolment, usually in May.

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

Fee Discounts

FAMILY DISCOUNTS

These apply to families with 2, 3 or 4 students concurrently attending OLSH College. The discount (\$620, \$1,240 or \$3,200 respectively) is applied and reflected in the annual fees billed in January.

EARLY PAYMENT DISCOUNTS

Full fees paid by a specified date each year (usually at the end of February), will result in a \$250 discount for the family. This discount will only be applied if the payment is received by the due date and all fees are paid in full.

Full fees paid in two instalments by specified dates each year (usually the end of March and the end of August) will result in a \$50.00 discount per family, per instalment. This discount will only be applied if both instalment dates are met and all fees are paid in full.

Fee Concessions – Special Considerations

In certain circumstances, families may apply for a pro-rata reduction in fees or for an extended payment plan. These may be available in circumstances including:

- **Financial hardship.** Parents(s)/guardians(s) suffering short term financial hardship and who have a current Health Care Card or Pension Card are able to complete an 'Application for School Fees Concession' form and submit the application with the requested supporting information to the Principal or Business Manager. The completed form, available from the Business Office, needs to outline the circumstances of the financial hardship and include sufficient detail of the family's financial position to justify the application. Applications will be considered with high levels of confidentiality, sensitivity and care. The College's response to requests of this nature will be at the discretion of the Principal, on the understanding that the arrangements will be negotiated annually and the relative financial situation of the family updated.
- **Withdrawal of a student during the year.** It is a condition of enrolment that a minimum of one terms notice (i.e. 10 weeks), in writing addressed directly to the Principal, is required to advise the College that a student is exiting. If the withdrawal notice is less than the specified minimum period of Notice, a termination fee of 25% of the Net Annual Fee will be paid immediately. Charging of the termination fee is not a penalty for withdrawal without notice but a calculation of genuine economic loss incurred by the College.

NOTE

- Families with outstanding fees from previous years may not be eligible for concession.
- Fee concessions/reductions will not be provided for student absence from the College.

Recovery of Outstanding Debts

- The College reserves the right to take legal action to recover outstanding debts from the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) when parent(s)/guardian(s) consistently disregard reminder notices and contact attempts by letter, email, phone or text, or fail to discuss the issue with the College, and/or default on alternative arrangements.
- This legal action may take the form of an external third party Debt Collection Agency, or issue of a letter through a solicitor. Families will be liable for **contingency fees**, i.e. collection costs, commissions and the fees and charges of a solicitor.
- If deemed to be necessary, this action may occur whilst the student is still attending the College.
- The Principal is the sole arbitrator of whether the College will reserve it's right to withdraw any student from optional Curricular activities and/or programs if the Annual Tuition Fees are outstanding.
- To avoid these outcomes, families are urged to consult with the Principal or the Business Manager.

Parental Liability

At the time of acceptance of enrolment, a student's parent(s) or guardian(s) sign the Enrolment Acceptance Form that incorporates obligations and agreements about the payment of fees. Each signatory to the enrolment application form, and/or subsequent re-enrolment form, will be solely or jointly responsible for the timely payment of fees.

Change of Parental and Family Status

If family and parental/guardianship arrangements alter, and the liability for the payment of fees changes from one party to another, either during the course of the student's enrolment or after she has left the College, each party is expected to notify the College so that a new Agreement can be made.

The notification must clearly indicate the change in the liability for the payment of fees and the commencement date of this change in liability. If the College does not receive a mutually accepted agreement for the parties involved, then the original signatories to the enrolment forms will be jointly held liable for all debts incurred.

Child Custody Status

The Family Law Act does not directly address education disputes, 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. Where a parent refuses to contribute any future fees, the remaining parent must sign a new enrolment authority accepting full responsibility for future fees.

Parenting orders now come under three headings:

- Residence Order
- Contact Order
- Specific Issues Order.

When faced with a dispute, the College will ask for a copy of the court order and whether a "parenting plan" exists.

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

RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

Policies

OLSH College Enrolment Policy (*refer College website*)

OLSH College Privacy Policy (*refer College website*)

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools: Policy 2.27, School Fees (www.macs.vic.edu.au/About-Us/Policies/School-Fees.aspx)

College Forms (*available from the Business office*)

Enrolment Acceptance and Bond Payment Form

Enrolment Agreement

Application for School Fees Concession

Fee Payment Options

POLICY STATUS AND HISTORY

Responsibility	OLSH College Board
Last revised and ratified	October 2021, April 2022
Next review date	April 2024