

# SACCS Fee Policy

## Policy



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## 1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to articulate the position of the South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools (SACCS) on school fees.

## 2 Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all diocesan and separately governed Catholic schools and to Catholic Education Offices in South Australia.

For separately governed Catholic schools, SACCS recognises and respects the governance role of the respective governing authorities. If a governing authority considers an aspect of the SACCS Fee Policy is at variance with its own governance arrangements, then SACCS and the governing authority will work in partnership and in good faith to resolve the matter.

The responsibility of SACCS to determine the Fee Policy for diocesan and separately governing Catholic schools in this manner is in keeping with its Statutes. In accordance with Canon 113#2, SACCS has the right and obligation to:

- make and review policy in those matters relating to Catholic schools which require coordination and rationalisation throughout the State of South Australia
- maintain a close working relationship with the Congregational Leaders of Religious Institutes involved in Catholic schools in South Australia.

## 3 Policy

### INTRODUCTION

Catholic Education in South Australia is a living expression of the Mission of the Catholic Church through the partnership of schools with families and parishes to create opportunities for encouraging life to the full in all its personal, spiritual, social, ecological and cultural dimensions.

SACCS gives life to the Mission by providing families with access to affordable education of the highest quality to enable students in Catholic schools to be 'Thriving People, Capable Learners, Leaders of the World God Desires'.

The fees set by Catholic schools represent their commitment to provide access to high quality education, whilst ensuring that a family's financial circumstances are not a barrier.

The SACCS Fee Policy exists to ensure fair and equitable school fee setting and collection processes apply to all families enrolled in a Catholic school in South Australia.

Upon enrolling their child in a Catholic school, parents/guardians enter a partnership with the school to engage, encourage, and support their child's education.

The partnership extends to families acting in good faith and spirit to fulfil their financial obligations to the school through their adherence to the agreed fee arrangement.

The SACCS Fee Policy relates to the setting of fees by Catholic schools in South Australia, the values and principles that should underpin the interactions with families on fee matters, and the responsibilities of the system, school personnel and parents/guardians regarding school fees.

## CONTEXT

Catholic schools in South Australia are funded in a way that requires the setting of fees.

The Australian Government determines and allocates a Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) for each student attending a school in Australia that is made up of a base allocation and loadings.

For most non-government schools, the Australian Government discounts the base amount of funding by the anticipated capacity of their school community to financially contribute towards the school's operating costs.

This is called the 'capacity to contribute' assessment and is based on the anticipated capacity of the school community to financially contribute towards the school's operating costs. The more financially advantaged the school community, the more the base amount is discounted. This reduction in base level funding to non-government schools is between 10% and 80%.

Consequently, schools in the non-Government sector cannot operate solely based on Government funding.

Catholic schools in South Australia are obliged to set fees to provide their learning programs, services and building programs that enable students to grow as thriving people, capable learners and leaders. The fees are determined and managed in a manner that considers the context of each Catholic school and the circumstances of families.

For Catholic schools to operate effectively and equitably, parents/guardians possess the responsibility to meet their fee obligations.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following Principles underpin the SACCS Fee Policy. The principles are to be taken holistically in the interpretation and application of the Policy.

### ***Common good***

The application of fees in Catholic schools is to assist families, especially those at the margin, to access Catholic education in a compassionate and just manner in the context of each Catholic school.

### ***Accessibility***

Within the Catholic system of education, parents/guardians have access to a complementary range of Catholic schools with varying fee schedules.

### ***Equity***

School fees are to be set with due regard for the nature and needs of individual students within the school community.

### ***Mutual respect***

The management of fees in Catholic schools is based on respectful relationships between parents/guardians and schools.

### ***Shared responsibility***

Parents/guardians and schools share together a responsibility for the education of students in Catholic schools.

### **Viability**

The management of fees and debt maintains the viability of Catholic schools; the payment of fees in a timely manner by parents/guardians is essential to the viability of their child's school.

### **Transparency**

The processes for the management of fees and debt are explicit, clear and open to scrutiny.

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

1. A family's financial circumstances should not be a barrier to a student accessing a Catholic education.
2. Each school is responsible for applying the policy's Guiding Principles to set its annual fee schedule, considering:
  - the school's delivery of the Mission of Catholic education so that students become *thriving people, capable learners, leaders of the world God desires*
  - the circumstances, needs and aspirations of the school community
  - the balance between the school's income and expenditure, including Government funding to the school and the school's operational, infrastructure and capital costs, to ensure its financial sustainability
  - fee remission arrangements that address the capacity of a parent/guardian to pay the school's fees.
3. Schools are to publish each year's fee schedule in the preceding calendar year and apply processes that are consistent with and in the spirit of this policy.
4. Upon a student's enrolment, schools agree to provide educational services for which parents/guardians accept the responsibility for the payment of fees in a timely manner.
5. Schools will work with parents/guardians in a just, respectful, compassionate, transparent and considered manner in the processes for setting and collecting fees.
6. Details of a family's financial circumstances in determining fee remission arrangements will be handled respectfully and with appropriate confidentiality in accordance with the school's Privacy Policy.
7. Where families do have the capacity to pay fees, then it is a matter of fairness that those who can afford to pay do so.
8. If parents/guardians are experiencing genuine financial difficulty it is their responsibility to meet with the principal/delegate for consideration of alternative financial arrangements. Any such arrangements shall be formally communicated by the school, be subject to periodic review, and may have terms and conditions applied.
9. Debt management with regards to outstanding fees should be based on positive and respectful relationships between schools and families.
10. Schools may take appropriate action to ensure a parent's/guardian's fee obligations are met, including, but not limited to, restricting a student's

participation in major extra-curricular activities where a significant amount of school fees is outstanding.

11. If an outstanding fee account is not resolved following the school's engagement with the parent/guardian, the school may undertake debt collection procedures, whilst adhering to the respective sections of the Fee Procedures. In these instances, a diocesan school should first obtain the approval of the Assistant Director Finance and Infrastructure. A separately governed school will act according to the arrangements of its respective governing authority.
12. Where outstanding fees are owing and no explanation or agreed payment terms are reached and adhered to, a diocesan school may seek a review by the respective Director of the ongoing enrolment of the student/s at the school. A separately governed school will act according to the arrangements of its respective governing authority.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. SACCS has the responsibility in partnership with the respective governing authorities of Catholic schools, to:
  - i. establish a clear and just Fee Policy for Catholic Schools, in accordance with its rights and obligations under its Statutes 'to make and review policy in those matters relating to Catholic schools which require coordination and rationalisation throughout the State of South Australia'
  - ii. exercise overall financial responsibility that ensures and enables schools to set fees so that Catholic education is accessible to all Catholic families, particularly taking into account that while families in the metropolitan area of Adelaide have a choice of schools, those families on the outer suburban areas and in the country have more limited choices, and
  - iii. promote the determination of Catholic education to respond to the needs of the poor and underprivileged in our society.
2. Catholic Education Offices have the responsibility on behalf of SACCS to:
  - i. prepare and issue Fee Procedures with regards to the management of fees and debt
  - ii. advise and support schools with the implementation of the SACCS Fee Policy
  - iii. ensure that school personnel carry out their responsibilities appropriately
  - iv. respond to any concerns from families in fees matters that cannot be resolved at the school level, and
  - v. advise SACCS in relation to appropriate financial circumstances, particularly in relation to the setting of fee schedules by schools.
3. School Boards have the responsibility on behalf of SACCS and the governing authorities to:
  - i. approve the annual budget of the school, including the setting and collection of fees

- ii. ensure that the school's fee and debtor management processes are consistent with the SACCS Fee Policy and the associated Fee Procedures of the Catholic Education Office or the relevant governing authority
  - iii. exercise oversight through its Finance Committee of the fees processes, including processes for the collection of outstanding fees and review of its debtor situation with respect to fees, and
  - iv. establish a clear understanding of who has responsibility for following through fee collection and for the granting of fee remissions.
4. Principals have the responsibility on behalf of SACCS, the governing authorities and the School Board to:
  - i. ensure that interactions of school personnel with parents/guardians with regards to fees and debt are consistent with the Catholic ethos and the Guiding Principles of the SACCS Fee Policy
  - ii. manage the school's fee and debtor management processes thoroughly and appropriately
  - iii. ensure that the school's fee and debtor management processes are in accordance with the Fee Procedures of the Catholic Education Office or the relevant governing authority and are exercised in a just and respectful manner.
5. Business Managers/Bursars/Finance Officers have the responsibility on behalf of SACCS, the governing authorities and the School Board to:
  - i. ensure that the processes and procedures for the administration of fees and debt at the school level are in accordance with the SACCS Fee Policy and the Fee Procedures of the Catholic Education Office or the relevant governing authority
  - ii. ensure that interactions of school personnel with parents/guardians with regards to fees and debt are consistent with the Catholic ethos and the Guiding Principles of the SACCS Fee Policy, and
  - iii. give appropriate advice to the Principal and School Board about matters relating to fees setting, appropriate fee levels for families and fee collection.
6. Parents/guardians have the responsibility to the rest of the school community to:
  - i. pay their fees as determined by the school's fee schedule and any arrangements they enter into with the school about the arrangements for their fee payment
  - ii. be honest in their dealings with the school, and
  - iii. respect the circumstances of other parents/guardians in the school community.

## Definitions

**Catholic school** means a diocesan or separately governed Catholic school in South Australia, with recognition of the relationship between SACCS and the Religious Institute and Ministerial Public Juridic Person governing bodies involved in Catholic schools in South Australia.

**Staff** means staff employed in any diocesan or separately governed Catholic school or Catholic Education Office in South Australia.

**Fees** cover all fees and charges invoiced by a school to parents/guardians.

## Responsibility for implementation, monitoring, and continual improvement

Responsibility for implementation, monitoring and review of the policy is vested at the level appropriate to the following roles:

Catholic Education Offices	Catholic Schools
Assistant Director, Finance and Infrastructure	Principal
Manager, Finance Policy and Funding	School Board (or Equivalent)

## Supporting procedures or policy support documents

The following documents are to be read in conjunction with, and are additional to, any other relevant South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools (SACCS), school or CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE policy, procedure or support document.

- Fee Procedures
- Enrolment Policy
- Enrolment Contract

## Revision Record

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