



# SCHOOL FEES COLLECTION POLICY

## OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS SCHOOL, HENDRA

Updated October 2022

### Purpose

*To administer with compassion while striving for justice and equity for all in the partnership of Catholic education.*

The purpose of this policy is to outline Brisbane Catholic Education's (BCE) principles for the setting and collection of school fees and for deciding fee concessions by BCE schools. This policy will ensure a consistent approach across the system, one that is fair to families and that allows all students to access a Catholic education and all aspects of the curriculum.

OLHC families support the education of their child by paying fees and levies as a necessary contribution to the costs of delivering a high quality of Catholic education and allow for the provision of:

- Teacher support, administrative support, and ground staff.
- Essential resources, facilities, and equipment
- Maintain buildings, grounds, and equipment.
- Service recurrent expenses.
- Address the shortfall and bridge the gap between what the government pays per student in a Catholic school compared to the payment made by government to state schools.

### Aims

- To ensure that all parents and guardians are well informed about expectations regarding fee payment and collection procedures.
- To ensure all members of the school community are treated with fairness, compassion, and justice in the process of payment and collection of fees.
- To ensure fee collection rates enable the ongoing provision of quality Catholic education for all students.

Fees are set and advised annually by the school. It is expected that school fees charged will be paid by the due date. Continuing enrolment at OLHC is conditional upon the payment of school fees and levies or, should the need arise, the participation in a process to determine a level of concession.

### Fee and Levy Statements

The statement will show the following:

- School Fees pay for the everyday operations of our school and general running costs. Along with government funding, this levy provides for the staffing and functioning of the school.
- Capital Levy (per family) is used to fund all building works and to assist with the building program; pay the capital and interest on building loans and for the maintenance and upkeep of buildings.
- General Purpose Levy (per family) is used for the maintenance and upgrading of technology equipment accessed by all students. The range of technologies used in each learning space on an everyday basis is a testament to how our technological capabilities are improving each year. This will also cover the increase in electricity costs for the air conditioning of classrooms.

- P&F Levy (per family) is combined with monies raised through fundraising, this levy finances P&F initiatives that aid the resourcing of OLHC. The levy ensures that there is an equitable contribution of all families to the activities of the P&F in support of our school.
- Voluntary Building Fund is an additional item that is completely voluntary but enable the provision of another avenue to enhance resourcing and to maintain the facilities in our school while ensuring there is a limited impost on families due to receiving the full tax benefit.

### **Issuing of Accounts**

Accounts for fees and levies are forwarded to all account holders within the first two weeks of each term. Fees and levies are separately identified on the account.

The fee account shows a due date for payment of the fees. The due date is within 14 days from the date of issue.

Discounts apply for families with more than one child and for those who pay the full year's fees with the first term statement.

### **Methods of Payment**

The preferred method of payment is Bpay. Payments can also be made by EFT, direct deposit and with cash (always pay in person and obtain a receipt). For your added convenience, payment plans, and direct debit facilities are available. Please contact [phenfinance@bne.catholic.edu.au](mailto:phenfinance@bne.catholic.edu.au) for more information on payment plans.

### **Reminder Notices**

On expiry of the due date, a 'Customer Statement' is sent to all account holders. This statement displays any payments that have been made and/or the outstanding amount requiring immediate payment.

Should accounts continue to remain outstanding, a member of the Administration Team will make contact to discuss the outstanding fees. A final notice will then be sent giving a further two (2) weeks to pay. Our normal procedure is to apportion the payment made against all fees and levies (including Building Fund Levy) shown on the *original* account.

If a suitable response is not received within fourteen days, the principal or finance officer, contacts the family. The object of the contact is:

[a] To collect fees in full or in instalments; or

[b] To establish the capacity to pay; or

[c] To establish the inability of the family to pay fees/genuine financial hardship and hence establish the amount of concession to fees applicable.

If there are no extenuating circumstances, the principal or designated person may warn the family that the collection process will begin.

Where language and ethnic circumstances warrant, contact through a liaison person will occur.

If suitable arrangements are unable to be made following the sending out of a reminder notice and personal contact, the principal or finance officer may send out a Final Notice giving a further 2 weeks to pay.

### **Overdue Accounts**

On rare occasions people fail to pay their account, do not respond to reminder notices, and do not contact the school to make alternate arrangements. In these instances, OLHC is reluctantly forced to consider engaging the services of a professional debt collection agency.

Please be aware that additional charges may be incurred once the account has been handed to the debt collection agency for action. Once accounts have been handed to the debt collection agency, the matter effectively passes out of the school's control and all negotiations for payment must then be made with the debt collectors. Your credit rating may also be affected.

It is accepted that by initiating these procedures, on rare occasions it may be necessary for the school to proceed to further action and take court action. Such occasions occur when there is clear evidence of ability to pay.

### **Payment Difficulties**

It is easy to overlook an account in the rush of everyday life and for this reason we send a Customer Statement for all customer accounts after the due date. Sometimes, for very good reasons that are usually out of our control, an account cannot be paid by the due date. If you are experiencing difficulties in paying your account, please contact the OLHC as soon as possible, preferably before the due date. We will then be in a position to offer some assistance such as of extending the time to pay or offering a payment by instalment option. In cases of extreme financial hardship, the school will consider granting a fee concession.

### **Concessions**

Schools may grant concessions or deferral of payment of school fees and levies to parents in times of genuine need. The determination of a concession or deferral is a local decision and should be based on a just and equitable formula.

BCEO uses [Henderson Poverty Lines](#) as a guide for assessing eligibility for fee concessions. The assessment process takes all income into consideration including, wages, youth allowance, all other Centrelink payments, as well as housing costs, such as rent or mortgage.

Concessions must be calculated annually using the BCE Concessions template, the financial circumstances of families, and based on a just and equitable formula. Concessions do not transfer from primary to colleges or between schools. The concession must be calculated on a case-by-case basis.

### **Fee Increases**

BCE determines the fee increase range, informed by the Commonwealth Government's Direct Measure of Income (DMI) and the capacity to contribute to the School Resource Standard, and communicate this on an annual basis.

### **Additional Points to note**

- The principal or finance officer documents all communications with families - phone calls, interviews, correspondence.
- The principal places a general note in the newsletter at an appropriate time about the volume of outstanding fees and the requirement to pass bad debts onto the collection agency.
- When parents apply for enrolment of children for whom they have not paid school fees at a previous systemic school, the enrolment is not confirmed until the debt is paid or waived on the previous principal's advice. Arrangements for payment of future fees are then put in place before proceeding with the enrolment.