ST. MARY’S PRIMARY SCHOOL, WILLIAMSTOWN
SCHOOL FEES POLICY

Preamble
St. Mary’s Primary School is a co-educational Catholic school community that, in partnership with parents, strives to provide its students with an holistic education in an environment formed by the Gospel and imbued with the values of St. Mary MacKillop.

All parents at St. Mary’s Primary School have given their firm undertaking that they support the Catholic ethos of the school – and with this commitment to Catholic education comes a financial commitment. In order to deliver quality Catholic education to all its students, St. Mary’s relies upon the collection of school fees and levies from parents as a necessary supplement to government funding.

Responsible financial stewardship is crucial to the future of St. Mary’s Primary School. The Principal and Parish Priest will set fees and levies at a level which will result in a financially viable school, whilst keeping parents’ fees and levies as affordable as possible.

Upon enrolment all parents at St. Mary’s Primary School will be made aware of their obligations to make a fair and just contribution to their child’s education via the payment of school fees and levies.

Background
In recognition of the differential capacity of families to contribute to the costs of education, both the Australian and State governments incorporate a needs-based element into their recurrent funding of the Catholic school system. The Australian Government uses the Socio Economic Status (SES) index, which is intended to account for the financial position of families, while the State Government includes the SES and each school’s Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) enrolment level in its formula. Both formulas are designed to fund the system according to need.

The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) policy formula for allocating funding to Catholic schools also accounts for need in that, all other factors being equal, lower SES schools receive more funding than higher SES schools. In addition, schools are provided with additional financial assistance for each EMA student which enables them to offer fee remissions.
**Definitions**

- **School fees** are what the school charges families for the education of their children.
- **Private income** is that portion of a school’s income which is not derived from Government recurrent and targeted grants.
- **Socio-economic status (SES)** is a measure of an individual or group’s standing in the community and is based on variables including income, occupation, educational attainment and wealth.
- The **Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)** is an allowance provided by the State Government to assist low-income families to meet the educational needs of their children. The proportion of EMA recipients pupils enrolled at a school is therefore a measure of the school’s ‘need’ or disadvantage.
- **School levy** is a specific purpose school charge that is in addition to the school fees.

**School Fees Policy Principles**

In formulating the school fees policy for St. Mary’s Primary School, Williamstown, the school was guided by the values of St. Mary MacKillop and the fee setting and fee collection practices outlined in the Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM) Policy 2.27 *School Fees*.

Policy 2.27 sets out the following guiding principles for Catholic school fees, which have been adopted by St. Mary’s:

**Responsibility** – Each Catholic school is responsible for setting its own fees.

**Accessibility** – Catholic schools should be accessible to all Catholic families irrespective of capacity to pay.

**Needs-based** – As Governments and the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) allocate funds on the basis of need, and given the principle of accessibility, Catholic schools must take into account the ability of parents to pay when setting and collecting fees.

**Relevant Legislation**

This policy complies with the following legislation where it is relevant to the collection of school fees at a Catholic school:

- Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000 (Cth)
**Procedures for Fee Setting**

St. Mary’s Primary School fees and levies are set on an annual basis by the Principal and Parish Priest in consultation with the Catholic Education Office Melbourne, School Accountant and the school’s Advisory Board. The level of school fees and levies charged must be sufficient to support St. Mary’s educational program and will reflect a broad range of considerations, including:

- Socio-economic status (SES) level of the school community
- Needs-based formula for the distribution of Government grants
- Cost of living (Consumer Price Index)
- School operating budget

In the final term of the school year, parents will be informed via a letter from the Principal of the school fees for the forthcoming year.

**St. Mary’s Primary School Fees Structure**

Fees at St. Mary’s Primary School consist of the following components:

- **Family School Fee – Tuition**
- **Individual Student Levy**
- **Camp Levy – applicable to Year 4-6 students only**
- **Parish Levy – applicable to families not contributing to the Parish’s Thanksgiving/Stewardship Program**

*See Appendix A for a copy of St. Mary’s fee structure for the current school year.*

**Family School Fee – Tuition**

A family school fee structure is utilised at St. Mary’s Primary School, which provides a discount to families with more than one student at the school. St. Mary’s Family School Fee, together with Government funding, covers the operating costs of the school. These costs include: administrative salaries, building/grounds/equipment maintenance, electricity, water, telephone, cleaning, insurance, resource development and capital expenditure etc.

**Individual Student Levy**

The Individual Student Levy is charged per child enrolled at St. Mary’s Primary School. The Individual Student Levy covers: student stationery, library books, text books, sacramental programs, performing arts, incursions and excursions, arts and craft, swimming tuition and sports.

Attendance at excursions and swimming tuition is compulsory, unless otherwise stated. These activities are budgeted and paid for in advance on an overall group basis. Accordingly, no refund is possible if a student does not participate.

**Camp Levy**

For students in Years 4, 5 and 6 a camp/excursion levy applies (see Appendix B). School camps and excursions form an integral part of the educational curriculum, and as such attendance is compulsory.
Parish Levy
St. Mary’s Primary School, like all other Catholic parish primary schools, derives its existence from the parish to which it belongs. Consequently, families that choose to send their children to a Catholic school also have an obligation to contribute to the Parish to ensure its continued viability.

As background, St. Mary’s Parish community has built and maintained significant buildings, e.g. the Church, as well as provided services to the Williamstown community for over 170 years. This is still true today with the current parish community responsible for maintaining all parish facilities and services now and into the future. Funding for this important work is achieved through the Parish community’s contribution to the Thanksgiving/Stewardship Program and for St. Mary’s Primary School families not already contributing, via a Parish Levy in lieu.

An annual Parish Levy is charged to school families not contributing to the Parish Thanksgiving/Stewardship Program as a matter of equity to the broader St. Mary’s Parish community – which contributes towards not only the cost of school buildings and facilities, but also the Church and parish facilities that all students directly benefit from. Throughout the school year St. Mary’s Primary School utilises Parish resources, services and facilities i.e. the Church, school hall and the Parish Centre and the Parish Levy represents a contribution towards their upkeep. (See Appendix A for the current year’s Parish Levy.)

The Parish Levy is due on the specified date in May of each year and payment can be made by cash, cheque made payable to “St. Mary’s Parish, Williamstown” or by direct debit. (See Appendix B for direct debit instalment options.) The Parish Levy is completely separate from St. Mary’s Primary School fees and is administered directly by the Parish Priest.

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)
The State Government’s Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is administered though the school office. It provides eligible families with assistance in meeting the costs associated with the education of their children. To be eligible for receipt of the EMA you must:

- be a parent/guardian of a student under 16 years of age; and
- be an eligible beneficiary of a Centrelink pension, allowance or benefit within the meaning of the State Concessions Act 2004 or be a Veterans Affairs pensioner or be a foster parent

The EMA is an annual allowance, which is paid in two instalments that are divided evenly between the parent/guardian and the school. The allowance increases each year with CPI.

All eligible applicants are encouraged to contact the school office for an application form and for further information.
St. Mary’s Primary School will ensure that information regarding the EMA is furnished to new parents during the enrolment process. Regular inserts will be placed in the school newsletter to generate awareness amongst families of the EMA scheme, eligibility criteria and submission dates.

**Fee Concessions**

For families experiencing genuine financial hardship, or where other extenuating factors exist, a concession on the Family School Fee may be granted by the Principal and Parish Priest following verification of these circumstances. Families wishing to apply for concessional fees will need to arrange an appointment with the Principal at the commencement of the school year, or as the need arises, to confidentially discuss their situation.

All parents in receipt of an EMA allowance are eligible to apply at St. Mary’s for a discount in the Family School Fee.

Fee concessions will be determined in a non-discriminatory manner using a just and equitable formula. If concessions are required beyond the current school year, new arrangements will need to be negotiated each year.

In order to protect a family’s privacy, the reasons for granting a fee concession will remain confidential to the Principal and Parish Priest.

**Procedures for the Payment of Fees and Levies**

St. Mary’s Primary School relies upon the prompt payment of school fees to meet its day-to-day operating costs. Below is an overview of the key procedures for the collection of school fees and levies:

- In term four parents will be informed by a letter from the Principal of the forthcoming year’s Family School Fee and Individual Student Levy, including a payment schedule. Also accompanying this letter will be a Direct Debit Instalments form for the payment of the Family School Fee. Each year a new Direct Debit Instalments form needs to be completed. (See Appendix B for a copy of the current year’s direct debit instalment payment options.)

- Payment of the Individual Student Levy is required in full at the school office prior to the commencement of Term 1 each year.

- For parents who have not opted to pay their Family School Fee via direct debit instalments, fees are payable over three equal instalments – collected in Term 1, 2 and 3. Family School Fee statements are issued at the commencement of each term and are payable by the due date specified on the account. Notices reminding parents of the due date for the payment of term fees will be placed in the school newsletter.

- Parents who are unable to make full payment of their school fees by the due date are expected to immediately contact the Principal to discuss an alternative payment plan.
**Payment Methods**

Full payment of the Individual Student Levy is required at the school office – prior to the commencement of Term 1 on the date specified. The levy may be remitted either by cash or cheque (made payable to “St. Mary’s Primary School”).

The Family School Fee may be settled using a variety of payment methods:

- Direct debit instalment plan (payments are deducted from a selected credit card at instalment intervals as advised by parents)
- Cash – in person at the school office between 9.00am – 3.30pm
- Cheque – made payable to “St. Mary’s Primary School”
- Online Bank Transfer – St. Mary’s Primary School
  
  BSB: 083 347  
  Account No: 658206494  
  Reference: Individual Family Code*

* It is vital that parents include their individual Family Code, which is located on their school fees statement. This ensures that when a payment is received the school can identify the payee.

**Notice of Withdrawal & Fee Reimbursements**

One full term’s notice in writing to the Principal is required before the withdrawal of a student from St. Mary’s Primary School. If this notice is not given, payment of one full term’s fees in lieu is charged. St. Mary’s funding and annual expenditure is based upon enrolment numbers and it is highly unlikely that if a student leaves the school at short notice that their place will be filled.

The Individual Student Levy is non-refundable. The Family School Fee is also non-refundable, unless it has been paid upfront for the year. In the situation where parents have opted to pay the full year’s Family School Fee upfront, the Principal will determine on a case-by-case basis the reimbursement level – taking into consideration all of the various factors including the time remaining of the school year and the period of notice given before withdrawal.

**Leave of Absence**

There is no reimbursement of school fees for families with a student on a Leave of Absence as St. Mary’s Primary School is holding an enrolment place open for that child.

**Procedures for the Collection of Unpaid Fees**

In the event that parents fail to pay their child’s school fees, which are within their capacity to pay, St. Mary’s Primary School will actively pursue payment as a matter of justice and equity to the rest of the fee-paying school community.

For parents who have not formally entered into an alternative payment plan, and whose school fees accounts are in arrears, the below procedures shall be followed:

**Step 1 – 1st Reminder**

If payment of the original fees account has not been received after 1-2 weeks, a copy of the outstanding fee statement will be sent with “a friendly reminder – your account is overdue” sticker affixed requesting payment within 7 days.
Step 2 – 2nd Reminder

If payment has not been received after 1-2 weeks of the 1st reminder, a copy of the outstanding fee statement will be sent with “urgent action – this account is overdue – please pay at once” sticker affixed. A further 7 day extension for payment will be provided.

Step 3 – 1st Formal Letter

If after 7 days there has still been no response to the 2nd reminder, a formal letter from the Principal will be sent to parents requesting payment be made as soon as possible. The letter will include an invitation for parents experiencing financial difficulties to meet with the Principal to confidentially discuss the matter.

Step 4 – 2nd Formal Letter

If there has been no payment of fees or response to the 1st letter after 7 days, a letter from the Principal will be sent to parents seeking their payment by a specific date or seeking their attendance at a meeting with the Principal. The letter will also advise parents that their account may be handed to a debt collection agency for recovery, which may also involve the instigation of legal action should payment not be received within the specified timeframe. Any costs associated with the recovery of outstanding fees will be at the parents’ expense.

Step 5 – Telephone Contact

A follow-up telephone call to parents by the School Officer will occur if there has been no response to the 2nd letter after 7 days.

Step 6 – Final Notice

If after 7-14 days from the receipt of the 2nd letter parents have failed to pay their outstanding fees account and have ignored all reasonable attempts to negotiate a fee repayment agreement, the Principal and Parish Priest will make a determination whether the services of a debt collection agency or solicitor should be engaged. Parents will be informed via a final notice letter from the Principal of the school’s decision to place their account in the hands of a debt collection agency and/or pursue legal action for recovery.

As part of the school’s management of outstanding school fees, a detailed written record will be maintained of all correspondence, phone calls and meetings with parents.

The recovery of unpaid fees, particularly if this involves legal action, will be approached humanely and sensitively to protect the child/ren as much as possible from the public embarrassment that could arise. St. Mary’s Primary School will ensure that all approaches to parents for fee collection are based on appropriate pastoral procedures.
St. Mary’s Primary School will not withhold services or refuse a student’s ongoing enrolment as a fee collection strategy.

**Related Documents**

**Related School Policies**
- Enrolment
- Information Privacy Policy
- Parents as Partners in Catholic Education

**School Fees Policy Accessibility**
Current and prospective parents can access a copy of the School Fees Policy via the school’s website, or a copy will be provided upon request from the school office.

**Authorisation and Review**
This policy was adopted by St. Mary’s Primary School at a meeting of the Advisory Board on 27 October 2011. This policy shall be reviewed annually, or earlier if required.
SCHOOL FEES STRUCTURE

YEAR 2011

FAMILY SCHOOL FEE – TUITION
$1,482.00 per family

INDIVIDUAL - STUDENT LEVY
Student Fee per child $310.00

PARISH LEVY
Applicable to families who are not contributing to the Parish’s Thanksgiving/Stewardship Program
$200.00 per family

Method of Payments over the Year

TERM 1
School Fee $ 494.00
Student Levy $ 310.00
$ 804.00

TERM 2
School Fee $ 494.00

TERM 3
School Fee $ 494.00

Individual Fee due: Tues. 1st February, 2011 ($310.00)
Term 1 School Fee due: Tues. 15th March 2011 ($494.00)
Term 2 School Fee due: Wed. 15th June, 2011 ($494.00)
Term 3 School Fee due: Wed. 7th September, 2011 ($494.00)
NAME : .............................................. FAMILY NUMBER : ..............

ELDEST CHILD’S NAME AND CLASS : ..............................................................

TYPE OF CREDIT CARD

(  Mastercard

(  Visacard

Card Number : _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _      Expiry Date : _ _ / _ _

Exact Name on Card : (Please Print) .................................................................

Any amounts listed after the card expiry date will not be processed unless the school office has been advised of the new expiry date.

PAYMENT OPTIONS

To participate in the direct debit method please return this form no later than Friday 10th December 2010.

A total amount of $1,482.00 will be deducted for 2011 in the following instalments as advised by you.

   1 payment @ $1482.00 (taken out on 18th February, 2011)
   3 payments @ $494.00 per term = $1482.00 (15/3, 15/6, 7/9)
   7 monthly payments @ $211.72 = $1482.00 (comm. 18/2)
   15 fortnights @ $98.80 = $1482.00 (comm. 18/2)

Please note :

Any fees and charges incurred due to insufficient funds will be added to your account.

Signed : .............................................  Date : .................................

Telephone Number : ..............................

Office Use Only
Processing Date : ..............................  Completion Date : ..............................
APPENDIX B

ST MARY’S PRIMARY SCHOOL
PAYMENT FOR YEAR 6
CANBERRA CAMP – 2011

NAME : ..................................................... FAMILY NUMBER : ............

CHILD’S NAME AND CLASS : .................................................................

TYPE OF CREDIT CARD

☐ Mastercard

☐ Visacard

Card Number :     _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _      Expiry Date :    _ _  / _ _

Exact Name on Card : (Please Print) ............................................................

Any amounts listed after the card expiry date will not be processed unless the school office has been advised of the new expiry date.

PAYMENT OPTIONS
To participate in the direct debit method please return this form no later than Wednesday 16 March, 2011.

A total amount of $498.00 will be deducted for 2011 in the following instalments as advised by you.

1 payment @ $498.00 (taken out 6 June)

3 monthly payments @ $166.00 = $498.00 (commencing 6 April)

6 fortnights @ $83.00 = $498.00 (commencing 6 April)

Please note :
Any fees and charges incurred due to insufficient funds will be added to your account.

Signed : ................................. Date : ......................

Telephone Number : ......................

Office Use Only
Processing Date : ...................... Completion Date : ......................
ST MARY’S PRIMARY SCHOOL
PAYMENT FOR YEAR 5
BRIAR’S OUTDOOR EDUCATION CAMP,
MT. MARTHA – 2011

NAME : ........................................... FAMILY NUMBER : ............

CHILD’S NAME AND CLASS : .......................................................

TYPE OF CREDIT CARD

☐ Mastercard
☐ Visacard

Card Number : _____ _____ _____ _____ Expiry Date : __ / __

Exact Name on Card : (Please Print) ..........................................................

Any amounts listed after the card expiry date will not be processed unless the school office has been advised of the new expiry date.

PAYMENT OPTIONS

To participate in the direct debit method please return this form no later than Friday 10th December, 2010.

A total amount of $215.00 will be deducted for Year 5 camp in the following instalments as advised by you.

1 payment @ $215.00 (taken out 9th February)

☐ 2 monthly payments @ $107.50 = $215.00 (commencing 10 January)

Please note:
Any fees and charges incurred due to insufficient funds will be added to your account.

Signed : .................. Date : ....................

Telephone Number : ....................

Office Use Only
Processing Date : ....................... Completion Date : .....................
ST MARY’S PRIMARY SCHOOL
PAYMENT FOR YEAR 4
‘BIG DAY OUT’ AT SOVEREIGN HILL, BALLARAT – 2011

NAME : ..............................................  FAMILY NUMBER : ..............

CHILD’S NAME AND CLASS : .................................................................

TYPE OF CREDIT CARD

☐ Mastercard
☐ Visacard

Card Number :   _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _      Expiry Date :    _ _  / _ _

Exact Name on Card : (Please Print) ................................................................

Any amounts listed after the card expiry date will not be processed unless the school office has been advised of the new expiry date.

PAYMENT OPTIONS

To participate in the direct debit method please return this form no later than Wednesday 6 April, 2011.

A total amount of $75.00 will be deducted for 2011 in the following instalments as advised by you.

1 payment @ $75.00 (taken out 2 May 2011)

Please note:
Any fees and charges incurred due to insufficient funds will be added to your account.

Signed : ..............................................  Date : .........................

Telephone Number : .......................