

# FEES POLICY

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## 1 PRINCIPLE

Freshwater Creek Steiner School (the School) is an independent, non-denominational school that is funded by a combination of Commonwealth and State Government funding, fees paid by parents, grants, fundraising and donations. The School depends on tuition fees to bridge the gap between government funding and the cost of providing a high quality, Steiner education.

In setting tuition fees, the School balances its aim to provide a broad and well-resourced curriculum with considerations such as accessibility, diversity and inclusiveness, to ensure as many families as possible can access a Steiner education for their children. The School acknowledges the commitment families make to Steiner education when they pay fees.

Timely payment of fees is essential for the financial stability and viability of the School. To ensure equity across all families' right to choose this school for their children, the School adopts an assertive position regarding the collection of fees.

## 2 POLICY

It is our policy that:

- Freshwater Creek Steiner School is a fee-paying school and kindergarten.
- Payment of tuition fees is a requisite for enrolment.
- Accessibility, diversity and inclusiveness are considered when setting fee levels.
- For families experiencing short-term financial hardship and applying for financial assistance, consideration will be given to the family' s history and contribution to the School and commitment to Steiner education.
- Non-payment of fees without a prior arrangement being made with the Business Manager will result in termination of the child/ren' s enrolment. Outstanding debts may be referred to a debt collection agency for recovery.

## 3 IMPLEMENTATION

### Conditions of Enrolment - Fees

Families enrolling children at Freshwater Creek Steiner School are required to:

1. Pay the non-refundable Expression of Interest Fee, upon submission of the Expression of Interest to Enrol form.
2. Return the Offer of Enrolment letter, signed by legal guardian/s, and pay the Enrolment Bond.
3. Attend a fee induction interview with the Business Manager and sign the Financial Declaration (part of the Enrolment Application form) in the presence of the Business Manager. The person/s named in the Financial Declaration will be legally responsible for paying fees, regardless of any changes to marital status or living arrangements, until the School is notified otherwise by a Variation to Financial Declaration form signed by all parties.

4. Return a completed Enrolment Application form signed by legal guardian/s.
5. To continue enrolment, all tuition and other fees and charges must be paid as per the School's Fees Policy and Fees Schedule for each year. The School's fees and charges are subject to alteration with a minimum of one term's notice.

### **Fees Procedures**

1. Expression of Interest
2. Enrolment Offer
3. Monthly statements issued  
Fees are invoiced in 10 monthly instalments. The first invoice is issued by the end of the first week of Term 1 in each calendar year.

There are four payment options:

- a) Annual Upfront Fee Payment - Entire year's payment in advance. Fees paid in full by the second week of Term 1 receive the Upfront Fees Discount;
- b) Direct Debit either weekly or monthly (preferred payment method) – Payments can be spread over 10, 11 or 12 months. Direct Debit forms are supplied on enrolment or through the administration office.
- c) Standard Fee Payment Plan (default payment method) - 10 equal installments payable on the 15th of each month from February to November; or
- d) By arrangement with the Business Manager.

Your fees statement will include:

- Tuition Fees
- Instrument Hire fee (where applicable)
- Site Maintenance levy
- Building Fund suggested contribution
- Less any applicable discounts
- Less Conveyance Allowance
- Less CSEF allowance

### **Payment of Fees**

Timely payment is essential for the sustainable management of the School's financial resources. Failure to pay Tuition Fees may result in the termination of enrolment.

Payments may be made by:

- a) Completing a Direct Debit Authorization form and submitted it to the administration office (preferred);
- b) Direct deposit into the School's account with the Bendigo Bank, via your online banking facility;
- c) EFTPOS at the School Administration Office (credit or debit cards accepted);
- d) Cash or cheque via any branch of the Bendigo Bank, quoting the School's account number; or
- e) Using EzyDebit. Please see the Business Manager for more information.
- f) The School's bank account details are included on your monthly fee statement and on relevant enrolment forms. Please use the account identifier on your monthly statement as the reference on any payments made directly into the School's bank account, to ensure correct allocation. For Expression of Interest Fees and Enrolment Bonds, please use your child/ren's surname as the reference.

### **Enrolment Bond and Leaving the School**

There are three ways an enrolled child might leave the School:

- Graduation from Class 6
- Withdrawal of enrolment by the parent/guardians
- Termination of enrolment of the School

Where a child is graduating from Class 6, the Enrolment Bond will be credited to the family's fee account at the commencement of Term 4.

Where a child has been withdrawn and required notice period given, the Enrolment Bond will be credited to the family's fee account within 5 days of written notice of withdrawal being given.

Where a child's enrolment has been terminated by the School due to fees being in arrears, the Enrolment Bond will be retained to offset fees.

Where a child's enrolment has been terminated by the School for a different reason (for example expulsion), the Enrolment Bond will be used to offset any fees owing and any remaining balance will be refunded to the family.

## Notes on Fees

### 1. Bank charges

Where the School incurs costs related to bank transactions, the cost will be passed on to the person/s named on the Financial Declaration.

### 2. Commencement part way through a school term

Families with new students commencing partway through a school term will be invoiced pro-rata.

### 3. Hired Instruments

Hired instruments MUST be returned to the School prior to your child/ren's last day of school. Instrument Hire charges cannot be refunded, should a child be withdrawn from school part way through the year.

### 4. Long-term absences

Tuition Fees must continue to be paid during absences from school. The School will only consider waiving Tuition Fees where a child is absent from school for an extended period of term time, if the child or parent/guardian experiences exceptional circumstances. Applications for fee waiver for a long-term absence may be made in writing to the Business Manager and are granted wholly at the discretion of the School.

### 5. Bursaries

Bursaries may be offered to families with children currently enrolled at the School who are experiencing short-term hardship. Bursaries are assessed based on financial considerations (the School may ask to see evidence of income, expenses, assets and debts of the family) and also the demonstrated commitment of the family to the School and to Steiner education. Bursaries are awarded where financial need is demonstrated such that the child would otherwise be unable to remain in the School. Please see the Business Manager to apply. Bursaries are confidential arrangements between the School and an individual family and are therefore conditional on the family in receipt of the bursary maintaining confidentiality of the agreement.

### 6. Donations

All donations to the School in the form of goods or services are appreciated and help to keep expenses down and fees affordable to the largest number of families. The School does not offer discounts on any individual fees or charges as a result of donations. Use of donations will be allocated at the discretion of the School, unless offered and accepted for a specific purpose.

## Fee Collection – Fees in Arrears

### 1. Collection cycle

Day	Action
1	Invoice issued
15	Payment due.
16	SMS Payment reminder.
22	Email to family - account to be referred to debt collection agency.
30	Letter of demand (via registered mail).
45	Account referred to debt collection agency.
60	Account referred to Audit and Finance Sub-Committee - withdrawal of enrolment.
70	Legal action.

Monthly fee invoice/statements are issued from February to November inclusive. Instalments are due on the 15th day of each month. Fee payment options are outlined under Fees Procedures.

Where fee payments fall behind agreed terms, the School will follow its Fee Collection Procedure, as outlined above. Should your family be experiencing financial hardship, please make an appointment to speak to the Business Manager so that alternative payment arrangements can be made to ensure your child/ren's continued enrolment.

Where the School has not been contacted to arrange payment of an outstanding fee account, the parties on the Financial Declaration (on the child's enrolment form) will be advised by registered mail that their account will be referred to the School's debt collection agency.

If payment is not received within 10 business days of the date listed on the letter, a file will be sent to the School's debt collection agency, containing the children's enrolment forms, the latest fee statement and any correspondence relating to payment of fees between the school and the family. All/any signatories in the Financial Declaration section of the Enrolment Form will be pursued for payment of the outstanding debt. The file will remain with the agency until the debt is repaid in full or to the satisfaction of the Audit and Finance Sub-Committee.

The Audit and Finance Sub-Committee will review the performance of the debt collection agency on an annual basis from the date of appointment, including any feedback received from the school community, and make recommendation to the Council as appropriate.

If payment is not received within the timeframe stipulated by the School's debt collection agency, the Business Manager will liaise with the relevant debt collection agency as to how to proceed. The resulting action will be determined on a case by case basis by the Audit & Finance Sub-Committee, and may include withdrawal of enrolment.

The Audit & Finance Sub-Committee has the discretion to vary the fee collection procedure by unanimous agreement as appropriate.

## 4 DEFINITIONS

### **Building Fund and Library Fund**

The Building and Library Fund provides vital resources for growing the School and maintaining a high standard of infrastructure to support a quality education. It has Deductible Gift Recipient status with the Australian Taxation Office and contributions towards the fund are fully tax deductible.

Each year, the School asks all families to make a voluntary contribution towards the fund, with the minimum amount indicated on your fee statement (and listed on the annual Fees Schedule).

### **Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF)**

The Victorian Government provides an annual payment for eligible primary school children to attend activities such as school camps and school-organised sports programs. Families who hold a valid means-tested concession card, and temporary foster parents, are eligible to apply. The CSEF amount is paid to the School and is deducted from the family's fee account. The amount of the CSEF can be found on the School's annual Fees Schedule and information about who can apply can be found at:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/csef.aspx#link22>

Application forms are made available to parents in the first month of each school year and applications close at the end of Term 1 of each school year. Receipt of CSEF qualifies a family to receive the Health Care Card Discount (see Discounts below).

### **Conveyance Allowance**

Families with primary school children living more than 4.8km from the School may be eligible for a Conveyance Allowance from the State Government to assist with travel expenses. The Conveyance Allowance is paid on a quarterly basis and is credited directly to your fee account. The Office Manager or Administration Assistant can help you to determine if you are eligible for this allowance.

### **Discounts**

- a) Health Care Card Discount –
  - a. Primary school families holding a valid means-tested Health Care Card may be eligible for a further discount (on top of any other discounts applied), conditional upon the child being approved for a CSEF payment (see Definitions). Please contact the Business Manager for more information. This discount will be applied to the May statement, as a catch-up amount for the February to May period, and then monthly from June to November.
  - b. Kindergarten families who hold a valid Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Visa 785, Visa 786 or Veteran Affairs Gold Card may be eligible for a Department of Human Services fee subsidy, which is directly credited against fees. If you become eligible for any of these cards during the school

year, please take your card to the Administration Office.

- b) Sibling discount – Families with more than one child enrolled at the School at the same time, receive a sibling discount. This discount is applied according to the payment schedule selected, i.e. on the full year invoice for Annual Upfront Fee Payment, or in 10 equal instalments for the Fee Payment Plan.
- c) Staff discount – A discount on the Tuition Fees for children of staff members.
- d) Upfront Fee Discount – Annual tuition fees paid in full by the end of the second week of the school year are eligible for the Upfront Fee Discount. This discount is applied on the full year invoice. Families are notified of the following year's upfront discount amount and payment conditions in Term 4. Please notify the Business Manager if you wish to pay upfront.

The amount of each discount can be found in the annual Fees Schedule.

### **Enrolment Bond**

This is a bond payment of no more than one term's fees that confirms the acceptance of a child's enrolment and place at the School. This amount is held by the School until the child graduates or enrolment is withdrawn or cancelled with the appropriate Withdrawal Notice Period given. This payment is not refundable if the student does not proceed with the enrolment, unless the child's place can be filled by another child (from the waiting list, for example). Enrolment Bonds are held in a separate bank account to other School funds to guarantee it can be refunded at the appropriate time. The amount of the Enrolment Bond can be found on the annual Fees Schedule.

### **Expression of Interest Fee (non-refundable)**

This is a non-refundable administration fee that accompanies each Expression of Interest to Enrol form lodgement. Should the enrolment proceed, this fee will be credited towards the first term's fees. The amount of the fee can be found on the annual Fees Schedule.

### **Fees Schedule**

The document issued to current and prospective families each year in Term 4, that specifies the amount of all fees, levies, discounts and bonds for the School for the following calendar year. The Fees Schedule will be emailed to all current families in Term 4 each year and is available on the School's website.

### **Instrument Hire**

A violin or cello hire fee will be applicable in years 3 - 6, where a parent chooses to hire instead of buy an instrument for their child. Hiring may be preferable to buying, as it allows the student to change instrument sizes (should they require), and includes insurance against repairs from accidental damage.

### **Site Maintenance Levy**

The Site Maintenance Levy is an annual charge that helps to offset the cost of maintaining the School's grounds and gardens. The levy is applied on the first fee invoice of the year, for families with a child enrolled in the primary school. The Site Maintenance Levy is fully refundable through attendance at working bees. To receive the refund, at least one family member is required to attend one working bee per term, for at least 4 hours. The amount of the levy can be found on the annual Fees Schedule.

### **Tuition Fee**

This fee contributes toward the total cost of your child/ren's education. Tuition Fees are set in Term 3 of each year for the following year and can be found on the Fees Schedule.

### **Withdrawal Notice Period**

The amount of notice, in school term weeks, that a family must give the School if they wish to withdraw their child's enrolment. The current Withdrawal Notice Period can be found on the annual Fees Schedule. Failure to give the required Withdrawal Notice Period will result in the forfeit of the Enrolment Bond.

## **5 AUTHORITY AND RELATED DOCUMENTS**

Bursary Policy  
Fees Schedule

## **6 APPROVAL AND REVIEW DETAILS**

<b>Approval and Review</b>	<b>Details</b>
Approval Authority	School Council

<b>Approval and Review</b>	<b>Details</b>
Administrator	Head of School
Original Approval Date	
<b>Approval and Amendment History</b>	<b>Details</b>
Next Review Date	
Review and authority history	
Notes	