



Concessional Fee Policy for MACS Primary Schools



Purpose

This policy outlines the process by which Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS) primary schools will provide fee concessions to families of students experiencing financial hardship, who would otherwise be impeded from receiving a Catholic education. It acknowledges the need for families to meet their school fee obligations according to their capacity to pay, while providing a consistent approach to school fee concessions across all MACS primary schools.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- MACS primary schools
- MACS primary school students whose families are:
 - of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage
 - holders of Department of Human Services Health Care Cards
 - holders of Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Cards
 - holders of Department of Home Affairs Proof of Identity card (ImmiCard)
 - refugees, where the child has attended a school within Australia for less than five years
 - required to relocate schools to St Michael's Catholic Primary School, North Melbourne, as their (Australian resident) child requires long-term medical treatment at The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne
 - experiencing genuine financial hardship (e.g., loss of family home, and/or loss of income through volunteering to fight bushfires, COVID-19 or illness and/or loss of livelihood/income caused by bushfires, COVID-19 or illness)
- concessional fee decisions made on behalf of MACS primary schools by MACS principals. This policy does not apply in MACS secondary schools or colleges.

Principles

This policy is sourced from the principles of Catholic social teaching and, in particular, 'the dignity of the human person', 'preferential option for the poor' and 'the common good'.

- **Dignity of the human person:** processes for the collection of school fees, granting of fee concessions and recovery of unpaid school fees need to be transparent, fair and just.
- **Preferential option for the poor:** Catholic schools should be accessible to all Catholic families irrespective of their capacity to pay. The Catholic Church's preferential option for the poor obligates Catholic schools to ensure that no baptised Catholic student is denied a Catholic education because of a family's inability to pay school fees: '... the preferential love for the poor represents a fundamental choice for the Church, and she proposes it to all people of good will'.¹
- **The common good:** each MACS primary school is responsible for setting its own fees, taking into consideration both the income needed for the school to operate and the capacity of their families to pay.

¹ Pope John Paul II, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Rome, 2006.

Policy

1. Eligibility for Concessional School Fees

- 1.1. Concessional school fees are available to any family that meets the below eligibility criteria:
 - 1.1.1. of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage
 - 1.1.2. holding a Health Care Card (HCC) and eligible for Camps, Sport and Excursion Fund (CSEF)
 - 1.1.3. experiencing genuine financial hardship
 - 1.1.4. holding a Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Gold Card
 - 1.1.5. identified as refugees and holding an ImmiCard is strongly encouraged to apply for concessional school fees.
- 1.2. Any family required to relocate their (Australian resident) child to St Michael's Catholic Primary School, North Melbourne, due to the child requiring long term medical treatment at The Royal Children's Hospital,

Melbourne will be eligible for concessional student fees. Pro-rata concession is provided for part-year attendance. An annual statutory declaration is required to confirm eligibility.

- 1.3. Home schooled students (HSS) who attend a MACS primary school on a part time basis, who meet any of the criteria detailed in 1.1 or 1.2 are eligible for concessional student fees.

2. Ineligibility for Concessional School Fees

- 2.1. Full Fee Paying Overseas Students (FFPOS) or full-time HSS are ineligible for concessional school fees as government funding is not available for FFPOS or full-time HSS.

3. Concessional School Fees for Eligible Students

- 3.1. Students of eligible families are entitled to concessional school fees.
- 3.2. The school fees for eligible students are:
 - 3.2.1. One child: \$15 per child per week, direct debit (\$780 per annum or \$195 per term)
 - 3.2.2. Two children: \$23 for the family per week, direct debit (\$1,196 per annum, or \$299 per term)
 - 3.2.3. Three or more children: \$30 for the family per week, direct debit (\$1,560 per annum, or \$390 per term)
- 3.3. The above fees cover both tuition fees and levies.

4. Health Care Card Factor Funding and Top-up Grants for Concessional Fees

- 4.1. Schools with enrolled students whose families hold an HCC and are registered for CSEF will receive Health Care Card Factor funding for those students.
- 4.2. Where schools have students eligible for concessional fees detailed at 3.2 and their total loss of income exceeds the school's total Health Care Card Factor funding, the school may be eligible for top-up grant funding from the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) or MACS to cover the loss of income.
- 4.3. Grants received by schools from the CECV or MACS because of this policy, such as Health Care Card Factor funding or top-up funding, must only be used for the purpose of enabling financially disadvantaged MACS primary school students to access a faith-based Catholic education and may not be used for any other purpose.
- 4.4. Health Care Card Factor funding and top-up funding may only be expended on recurrent purposes, i.e., in the same manner as other tuition and levy income.
- 4.5. Health Care Card Factor funding and top-up funding cannot be expended for capital purposes.
- 4.6. MACS will conduct periodic reviews to ensure that Health Care Card Factor funding and top-up funding have been expended appropriately by recipient schools.

5. Operationalisation of Concessional Fee Policy

- 5.1. Principals may apply this policy and procedures from the date of approval of this policy.
- 5.2. All schools are required to comply with this policy prior to setting fees.

Delegations and authorities

Role	Description of power/function	Limitations/conditions	Reporting requirement (if applicable)
Principal	Approval for fee discounts, rebates and write-offs	Approval should be in writing	Inform School Advisory Council

Definitions

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV)

The overarching, strategic-planning and policy-making body for the Catholic school system in Victoria, including MACS schools.

Camps, Sports and Excursion Fund (CSEF)

Victorian government funding for students of families who are eligible, means tested Department of Human Services Concession Card (DHSCC) holders. CSEF is used to offset school fees or levies related to camps, sports and excursions.

CentrePay

A free, voluntary service to pay bills and expenses as regular deductions from a client's Centrelink payments.

Health Care Card (HCC)

Department of Human Services Health Care Card which entitles the card holder to receive Australian Government financial and other assistance.

Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Gold Card

Department of Veterans' Affairs Health Card – All Conditions or Totally & Permanently Incapacitated. Eligible card holders are veterans and former members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) their widow(er)s and dependants. Eligibility is determined by the level of disability of the veteran or the status of dependants of the veteran, as determined by the DVA.

Fee concession

A remission or exemption from school fees payable because of financial hardship.

Home school student (HSS)

A home schooled student. Home school students who attend a Catholic primary school on a part- time basis are eligible to receive government funding towards their education on a fractional, full- time equivalent basis.

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS)

MACS is a reference to Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd, and / or its subsidiaries, MACSS and/or MACSEYE (as the context requires).

MACS school or school

A school which operates with the consent of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne and is owned, operated and governed by MACS, directly or through MACSS (as the context requires). References to schools or MACS schools also includes boarding premises of schools operated by MACS and specialist schools operated by MACSS.

Principal

Individual appointed by MACS as principal in a MACS primary school.

Refugee

A person who:

- in a case where the person has a nationality, is outside the country of his or her nationality and, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution, is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or
- in a case where the person does not have a nationality, is outside the country of his or her former habitual residence and owing to a well-founded fear of persecution, is unable or unwilling to return to it. Refer Migration Act 1958 Sect 5H.

School Advisory Council

Supports the principal of a MACS schools by providing a forum for discussion and discernment where parent voice and community perspective can help inform decision-making.

School fees

The fees and levies charged by a MACS school to families for the education of children in the school.

Related policies and documents

Related MACS policies and documents

Concessional Fee Policy – Template for Schools

Concessional Fee Program – Procedures – MACS Primary Schools Privacy Policy

Private Income Policy

Resources

Legislation and standards

Migration Act 1958 (Cth) Sect 5H

Policy information

Responsible director	Director, Finance and Digital
Policy owner	Chief Financial Officer
Approving authority	Executive Director
Assigned board committee	Finance and Audit
Approval date	14 July 2023
Risk Rating	Moderate
Date of next review	May 2025
Publication	CEVN, MACS
POLICY DATABASE INFORMATION	
Assigned framework	Financial
Supporting documents	
Superseded documents	MACS Concessional Fee Policy Primary Schools – v1.0 – 2021
New policy	