Catholic Schools
Parramatta Diocese

School Fees Policy

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1. Introduction and Purpose

Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese (CSPD) is committed to ensuring a quality Catholic education is affordable and accessible for all families.

Approximately 80 percent of the funding for Catholic systemic schools comes from Commonwealth and State government funding, with the remaining funds from tuition fees and other charges.

These contributions are not only essential for meeting operational costs but are also an expression of shared responsibility and stewardship of resources for the common good. School fees directly support the mission of forming young people in faith, service, and justice, ensuring our schools remain vibrant centres of learning, prayer, and community**.**

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure fair and equitable school fee assistance and collection processes across all schools in the Diocese of Parramatta.

CSPD may periodically review and update this Policy to incorporate new legislation, changes in funding and operations, as well as societal shifts, ensuring that the Policy remains aligned with the evolving educational landscape. Amendments to this Policy will be endorsed by CSPD's Executive Leadership Team.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all Parents/Carers with children enrolled in CSPD schools and Parents/Carers seeking enrolment for their child in a CSPD school.

3. Definitions

BMSF means the Bishop Manning Support Fund.

CSPD means Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese Ltd and includes CSPD Support Teams and Schools.

Enrolment Contract refers to the binding legal contract between CSPD and Parents/Carers described in the CSPD Enrolment Policy.

Enrolment signatories mean the Parents/Carers who signed the Enrolment Application and Acceptance Form. A reference to Parents/Carers in this policy means the Enrolment Signatories.

Full Fee-Paying Students means Overseas Students (Visa subclass 500) and temporary Visitor Visa students who are restricted to a maximum of 3 months' study. Full-Fee paying students do not attract government funding.

Genuine Financial Hardship means a situation where Parents/Carers are unable, reasonably, to discharge their financial obligations to pay school fees because of illness, unemployment or other reasonable cause, rather than an unwillingness to pay. Financial Hardship can be of limited or long term duration.

Joint and several liability means that each person who has signed the CSPD Enrolment Application and Acceptance form is individually responsible for payment of all school fees and levies, regardless of any fee-paying arrangements between Parent(s)/Carer(s).

School Fees means Diocesan Fees (Tuition and Building Levy), School-based fees (Resource fee, Activity fee and Overnight excursions), and charges for the supply of any other goods and services provided to or incurred on behalf of the individual student as determined by CSPD. School fees are as set out in the school fees schedule and are subject to variation by CSPD from time to time.

SFLU means the CSPD School Fees Liaison Unit. This is a Support Team within Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese.

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4. Principles

4.1 Parents/Carers are responsible for paying school fees in accordance with the Enrolment Contract and the CSPD School Fees Policy. It is acknowledged that families' situations can change and that this can have an impact on their capacity to pay in accordance with the Policy.

4.2 This Policy will be applied in a way that is just, consistent, respectful, compassionate and transparent.

4.3 CSPD will **not** deny a student access to a Catholic education in a CSPD school due to genuine financial hardship. In the tradition of the Catholic Church, education is a ministry of hope and justice. School fees are administered in a way that reflects the dignity of every family, recognising that each contributes to the mission of Catholic education according to their means. In stewarding resources for the common good, CSPD is committed to ensuring that no child is excluded from a Catholic education because of financial hardship.

4.4 The confidentiality of Parents'/Carers' personal information is paramount, and CSPD's Privacy Policy applies.

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5. School Fees Payable

5.1 Parents/Carers who have the capacity to pay school fees and who are not in genuine financial hardship are expected to pay them.

5.2 Parents/Carers who do **not** have the capacity to pay full school fees will be eligible to apply for fee assistance.

5.3 All school fees are expected to be paid within 30 days of the invoice/statement date unless:

i. The parent/carer has elected to pay via a Flexible Payment Plan as an alternative payment option or

ii. A payment arrangement is agreed to by the school or the CSPD School Fees Liaison Unit, in writing, prior to the initial payment due date or

iii. A concession or a specific fee support initiative is granted by CSPD.

5.4 Full Fee-paying students do not attract government funding and are billed differently from funded students. For more information, contact the school.

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6. Responsibility for Paying Fees

6.1 When Parents/Carers enrol their child in a CSPD school, they enter into an Enrolment Contract with CSPD to pay school fees whilst their child is enrolled at the school.

6.2 The Parents/Carers signing the *Enrolment Application* and *Acceptance Form* are, under law, jointly and severally liable for any debt incurred whilst their child is enrolled at the school.

6.3 As the obligation to pay school fees is joint and several, CSPD has a legal right to commence proceedings for recovery of outstanding school fees against both the signatories of the contract or individually at its discretion.

6.4 Court Orders about child support apply to the individuals named in the Orders and **not** to CSPD and therefore, do **not** compel CSPD to change its contract with Parents/Carers. Until a variation to the Enrolment Contract is submitted by both Parent/Carers who are subject to a Court Order, payment of fees in line with the signed Enrolment Contract will still be required. Child support payments from one (1) parent to another generally do not impact the obligation of either Parent/Carer to pay school fees where both are parties to the Enrolment Contract. For more information, contact the CSPD School Fees Liaison Unit at sflu@parra.catholic.edu.au.

6.5 Terminating an Enrolment Contract does **not** absolve Parents/Carers of their respective liability for any outstanding and unpaid school fees. The outstanding fees will remain payable. CSPD, at its discretion, may waive the enrolment liability on compassionate grounds. Refer to the CSPD Enrolment

Policy for the terms and conditions of terminating an enrolment contract.

6.6 Where a variation of Enrolment Contract is agreed to by CSPD and **both** Parents/Carers to the original enrolment contract, **both** Parents/Carers remain liable for fees incurred during the term of the original enrolment. Where one (1) Parent/Carer does not consent to the removal of the other Parent/Carer's liability, **both** Parents/Carers remain liable for all outstanding school fees and for all school fees going forward.

6.7 When CSPD determines that a student needs to be transferred to another CSPD school as per the CSPD Suspension, Transfer and Exclusion Procedure, Parents/Carers remain liable for any outstanding school fees at the original school.

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7. Notification of Termination - Withdrawing a Student's Enrolment

7.1 Notice of termination is required when a Parent/Carer withdraws his/her child from a CSPD school. The Parent/Carer must:

i. Give the school at least 10 school weeks' written notice of their intention to withdraw the child's enrolment at the school; and

ii. Pay 10 school weeks' fees from the date the written notice is given, which is due before the child's withdrawal.

7.2 The 10 school week's fees and notice period do not apply if:

i. The child is leaving the school because they have completed Year 6 or Year 12 at the school. Written notice is **not** required.

ii. The notice is given in Term 4 and the child is leaving in the following year's enrolment. Notice in writing will be accepted at any time during Term 4.

iii. There are some other circumstances that would warrant a waiver of the notice period. To find out more about what these circumstances are, contact the CSPD School Fees Liaison Unit at sflu@parra.catholic.edu.au.

7.3 Student transfer from one school to another within the CSPD system of schools does not incur additional fees.

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8. Overdue Fees and Legal Action

8.1 School Fees become overdue seven (7) days after the invoice due date. CSPD will contact Parents/Carers when school fees become overdue. This may include

automated reminders, emails, phone calls and invitations to attend meetings regarding overdue fees.

8.2 Upon enrolment, all Parent/Carers have committed to paying school fees, to notify CSPD of any inability to pay school fees, and to request special arrangements for fee support due to any financial difficulties or personal circumstances that impact their ability to pay.

i. Parents/Carers are asked to abide by the CSPD Family and School Partnership Principles that are based on transparency, honesty and respect. When Parents/Carers do not notify CSPD of an inability to pay school fees, CSPD will make attempts to contact and consult with the Parents/Carers to resolve overdue school fees. Parents/Carers are responsible for working in partnership with CSPD and responding to reasonable requests for further information and/or documentation.

ii. In circumstances where Parents/Carers are unwilling or have refused to communicate with CSPD on overdue school fees, this is considered a breach of the CSPD Family and School Partnership Principles.

a. When this occurs, CSPD will provide written notice to Parents/Carers and Parents /Carers will be requested to attend a school fees interview with CSPD. A failure to attend the school fees interview may jeopardise the ongoing enrolment of the student/s or enrolment of subsequent students.

b. In circumstances where all collection attempts and options have been exhausted, the Executive General Manager - Finance & Infrastructure (after consulting with the School Principal) may recommend the termination of the enrolment contract and all enrolled students of the family be excluded from the CSPD school from the commencement of the following school year, and the refusal of any future enrolments of the student/s or siblings in any school operated by CSPD, until such time that all outstanding payments are resolved and the enrolment exclusion is withdrawn.

The Executive General Manager - Finance & Infrastructure will then consult with the Chief Executive Officer, who must approve any termination or refusal of enrolment.

c. CSPD reserves its rights to commence legal action as per clause 8.3 of this Policy.

8.3 Where school fee accounts remain unpaid and no prior arrangement or contact has been made with the School or the CPSD School Fees Liaison Unit, or

arrangements previously made are subsequently not adhered to, CSPD may choose to commence legal action to recover outstanding monies. Every effort will be made to resolve matters pastorally and compassionately, in keeping with the mission of Catholic education and the Gospel imperative to walk with families in need. CSPD will only begin legal action when all other reasonable avenues to resolve the debt have been exhausted.

8.4 Where CSPD chooses to commence legal action:

i. All expenses reasonably incurred in pursuing recovery of overdue amounts, including (but not limited to) legal fees, interest incurred, and other administrative costs, are recoverable from the Enrolment Contract signatories.

ii. Any default debts and/or legal judgments may be reported to a credit reporting agency.

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9. Fee Support

9.1 Equity and Catholic Ethos

Fee relief is an expression of our Catholic mission to walk with families in times of hardship, ensuring that our schools are communities of inclusion, compassion, and hope.

Families in genuine financial hardship situations will be supported in a dignified, respectful and confidential manner. This support will also take into account cultural sensitivities when they are known. This includes making a determination about what reasonable contribution the Parents/Carers who signed the enrolment contract can make toward their child's education.

9.2 Requests for fee support can be made through the school or by contacting the CSPD School Fees Liaison Unit – Family Assistance team at SFLU@parra.catholic.edu.au or phone 02 9840 5798.

9.3 Where a Parent/Carer with children in more than one (1) CSPD school approaches more than one (1) school for assistance, a system approach to the assessment will be taken to ensure a consistent outcome in the shortest possible time.

9.4 A Parent/Carer or a school may request a review of the assessment outcome by contacting the CSPD School Fees Liaison Unit at SFLU@parra.catholic.edu.au. A review may not result in a change to the original assessment outcome.

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10. Financial Hardship

10.1 Financial Hardship - Fee Support

CSPD offers School Fees assistance to families who cannot pay their fees through a suitable payment arrangement. All applications for Fee Assistance must be completed by the Parents/Carers.

The types of fee assistance (concessions) available to families are outlined below in this Policy. For more information, refer to the CSPD website, contact the School or the CSPD School Fees Liaison Unit at sflu@parra.catholic.edu.au.

10.2 Application for School Fees Assistance due to Financial Hardship

Families experiencing financial hardship can complete an application for *School Fees Assistance*.

The application form is available from the school office or the CSPD website. An assessment is completed by the CSPD School Fees Liaison Unit, based on the information submitted in the application form, to determine financial hardship and confirm an inability to pay school fees.

10.3 Bishop Manning Support Fund (BMSF)

i. The Bishop Manning Support Fund (BMSF) provides full or part bursaries to assist families in need who desire a Catholic school education for their child/ren, but for whom the cost is out of reach; and

ii. Applies to **new** enrolments (enrolling in the following year) at a school within the Diocese of Parramatta. You can learn more about the BMSF here.

10.4 Byallawa

i. Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander families will be considered for school fee assistance under the Byallawa Scheme. Eligibility criteria for Byallawa are available here.

ii. The Byallawa scheme offered for a student in a systemic Catholic Primary school will be continued in a systemic Catholic Secondary school, unless family financial circumstances change.

10.5 Families Eligible for Centrelink support

i. Families who are eligible for Centrelink support may be considered for a concession on school fees. Eligibility criteria for school fees assistance are available here or by contacting the CSPD School Fees Liaison Unit at sflu@parra.catholic.edu.au.

ii. Parents/Carers who are eligible for Centrelink support are required to provide a Centrelink Consent form to CSPD.

iii. CSPD offers an alternative to the Centrelink Customer Consent Form process.

Parents/Carers can also make an application for Centrelink School Fee Assistance that does not involve completion of a Centrelink Customer Consent form. Other forms of supporting documentation are required.

10.6 Full Fee-Paying Students are **not** entitled to apply for fee concessions of any kind, as CSPD is bound by the regulated conditions attached to these students' Visas.

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11. Other Types of Fee Relief

11.1 Other Types of Fee Relief

There may be other circumstances where families may be eligible for partial or full fee concessions for a period of time based on pastoral grounds. Parents/Carers are asked to contact their school for more information or contact the School Fees Liaison Unit at sflu@parra.catholic.edu.au.

11.2 Specific fee support initiatives

CSPD may, at its discretion, provide other fee support initiatives for limited time periods with specified terms and conditions. The initiatives and the terms and conditions are published here on the CSPD website.

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12. Annual Review of Fee Support

12.1 Families who apply for a concession on school fees must complete a financial review within the 12-month anniversary of the previous concession. Where an initial assessment of eligibility for fee support establishes that the family's capacity to pay is unlikely to change, the following year's fees may also be waived.

12.2 The BMSF concession is subject to an annual review by the BMSF Committee, and families may be required to complete a financial review. Families must also reapply at the end of Year 6 when enrolling a student in a CSPD Secondary school.

12.3 Fee concessions will not extend beyond the anniversary date without completing the financial review.

12.4 Part Concessions

i. Where families have qualified for part concession, the remaining amount required to be paid in instalments must be paid in full prior to the next review, unless there are other circumstances that make this unreasonable. For more information, contact the CSPD School Fees Liaison Unit at sflu@parra.catholic.edu.au.

ii. A family may be refused further assistance if they refuse to pay the

amount agreed to as a condition of the part concession granted.

12.5 In addition to financial review, CSPD will assess annually how this Policy reflects our mission as Catholic schools, ensuring decisions about school fees uphold Gospel values, Catholic Social Teaching, and our commitment to the preferential option for those in need.

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13. Supporting families with children and young people in out-of-home care

Families who are supporting children through out-of-home care will be assessed for school fee concessions in the same way as any family that is experiencing financial difficulty. In pursuing its Policy, CSPD may, in some cases, waive school fees for students in out-of-home care on compassionate grounds. Contact the School for more information.

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14. Related Documents

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following CSPD Policies and Procedures:

- Enrolment Contract
- Enrolment Policy and Procedures
- Privacy Policy
- Information Sharing Policy
- CSPD Family and School Partnership Principles

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15. Further information

For more information on this Policy, contact the CSPD School Fees Liaison Unit on (02) 9840 5798 or via email at sflu@parra.catholic.edu.au.