

26 August 2009

Dear Montessori Parent

We have once again reached the time of year where Beechworth Montessori publishes their fees for the following year. The 2010 Beechworth Montessori Fee Policy has some significant changes from previous years.

During the course of 2009 the Beechworth Montessori Committee of Management has undertaken a thorough review of the strategic direction of the organisation. In consultation with parents, teachers and the wider Beechworth Montessori Community, a vision for “a child focussed, sustainable Montessori Learning Centre” has emerged. This vision has been the driving force behind the activities of the committee during 2009.

One of the key components of the strategic review has been the financial sustainability of Beechworth Montessori. Our review included a comparative study with other Victorian based Montessori organisations and independent schools. It became evident that our financial sustainability was being compromised by our existing fee policy. Most notably there had not been a fee rise during the previous three years which was placing financial strain on the organisation.

The attached fee policy seeks to provide a solid financial foundation from which the organisation can grow. The fee policy seeks to reflect the value of the educational programs delivered by our exceptional teachers and provide scope for the organisation to further develop the resources required to reach its full potential.

Through your commitment to Beechworth Montessori we have built a unique learning environment for our children. The result is an organisation that we are all proud of. Around this organisation we have built a community, a community that is welcoming, thoughtful and compassionate and with your ongoing support our community can continue on the journey towards a child focussed, sustainable Montessori Learning Centre.

Please continue to contribute to the discussion about Beechworth Montessori and we encourage you to attend the upcoming information night to be held on Tuesday 8th September at 7.30pm. The committee are always available to discuss issues and we look forward to seeing your family involved with Beechworth Montessori in 2010.

Yours sincerely



Clayton Neil
President – Beechworth Montessori

Working Document

Beechworth Montessori

FEES POLICY 2010

This document is not considered to be final until the finer details are confirmed by the Committee of Management, Principal and Staff.

And

until after the **Information Evening** to be held on

Tuesday 8th September 2009

At Beechworth Montessori

7.00 pm for 7.30pm commencement.

All financial reports, including 2009 Budget Tracking will be available for viewing.

This will be your opportunity to ask questions regarding the 2010 Fees Policy.

The 2010 Enrolment Intentions form

will be distributed to all Cycle 1 families after this Information Evening and is required for return by the end of term 3 –
Friday 18th September

FEES POLICY 2010

1. Policy Statement and Definitions

Values

Beechworth Montessori ("BM") is committed to:

- Providing responsible financial management of the centre, which includes setting fees that will result in a financially viable centre whilst keeping user fees at the lowest possible level.
- Providing a fair and manageable system for dealing with the failure to pay fees, and/or inability to pay outstanding debts.
- Maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents/guardians.
- Advising users of the centre about kindergarten and school funding models and that they are reliant on parent fees to operate the centre.
- Complying with all legislative requirements.

Purpose

To provide a clear set of guidelines for the setting, payment and collection of fees, which ensure the viability of the centre and the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided.

Definitions

Commonwealth child care benefit (CCB): CCB helps families with the costs of childcare for long day care, family day care, occasional care, outside school hours care, vacation care and registered care.

Fees: A payment for a place within a program at the centre.

Tiny Tots: An unfunded, early childhood educational program for children from birth to commencement at kindergarten.

Kindergarten: A universal early childhood educational program, funded by the state government, for children in the year prior to commencing primary school.

Primary School: A universal educational program funded by state and/or federal government for children in the years between completion of kindergarten and commencement of secondary education.

Levy: A payment made in lieu of parents/guardians involvement in specific activities, for example, fundraising, maintenance.

Visa 785: Commonwealth temporary protection visa.

Visa 786: Commonwealth humanitarian concern visa.

2. Scope

This policy applies to staff, committee and to parents/guardians whose child/ren are attending, or who wish to enroll a child/ren at the centre.

3. Background

3.1 Why fees are necessary

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) provides funding as a contribution toward the cost of operating a kindergarten program for children in the year before school. The Federal government via the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) provides funding for school age children as a general recurrent grant. The Victorian DEECD also provides funding for school age children through the state recurrent grants program. The centre itself is responsible for all operational costs. The level of funding available for school age children *is* dependent on the SES score resulting from student addresses.

There is no funding for other programs such as a three-year-old program or playgroup.

Fees are necessary because there is a shortfall between the level of government funding and the costs of operating a viable Tiny Tots, kindergarten and primary school.

Parents/guardians need to be aware that the programs offered by BM are not a free service and rely on prompt payment of fees to meet costs. All parents/guardians must pay fees and the centre has the discretion to withdraw service for non-payment of fees.

3.2 Fee subsidy for low income families

A parent/guardian or 4 year old funded child who holds a current Health Care Card/Pensioner Concession Card/Visa 786/785 is eligible for a reduction in their fees for the funded kindergarten program. Please note: 3 year old children are unfunded and therefore are not eligible for this discount.

The supporting documentation must be sighted by the Finance Manager prior to the start of each term.

3.3 Fee subsidy for siblings

A discount of 20% per first sibling, 30% per second sibling and 40% per third and subsequent siblings, per annum, has been set for families with more than one child attending the cycle 1, 2 or 3 rooms in the same year. This discount does not apply to siblings of staff or to siblings attending Tiny Tots.

3.4 Fee subsidy for staff

A discount of 25% has been set for children of current staff members.

3.5 Financial Assistance Program

Purpose:

The purpose of the BM Financial Assistance Program (FAP) is to provide children with the opportunity to continue their Montessori education when their families have met unforeseen financial hardship.

Qualification:

For children to qualify for the FAP, families must be able to demonstrate,

1. That their children were enrolled at BM in good faith that they could/would meet their fee commitments.
2. That they have genuinely met unforeseen financial hardship due to a change in their circumstances.
3. That as a result of this unforeseen financial hardship their children will be removed from BM.
4. The BM Finance Sub Committee (FSC) will assess each application in accordance with the 'Guidelines for Determining Applications for FAP' to decide whether the FAP will be offered.

Characteristics of the Financial Assistance Program:

1. Discretionary reduction of fees
2. Deferment of fees by negotiation
3. Where possible, the applicant will be asked to volunteer their time or skill as a demonstration of a reciprocal commitment to the education of their children.

Review Process:

Applications are reviewed on an annual basis or as agreed with FSC unless the applicant's situation changes within that period. At that time the applicant should inform the Principal of the change in their circumstances and the Finance subcommittee may choose to review the case immediately.

If families are unable to demonstrate the qualifying criteria and are still unable to meet their fee commitment then they should discuss their situation with the Principal.

3.6 Maintenance Fee

The maintenance fee, as set out in the attached fee schedule, is set for families of children in the cycle 1, 2 and 3 rooms. It will be waived if parents contribute 10 hours per family of voluntary labour per annum. Voluntary labour is described as attendance at working bees, sharing specific skills with staff and/or children, attending an excursion as a parent helper, or sitting on a committee. It does not include parent duty in the Tiny Tots or Cycle 1 room. The fee will be included in the first term fees and refunded in fourth term based on participation in the above activities.

3.7 Fundraising Fee

The fund raising fee, as set out in the attached fee schedule, is set for families of children in the cycle 1, 2 and 3 rooms. It will be waived if parents conduct a successful fund raising event. The fee will be included in the first term fees and refunded in fourth term upon request and confirmation/proof that they qualify for this refund. Staff who are parents and Members of the Committee of Management are exempt from this fee.

3.8 Childcare Transfer Fee

The childcare transfer fee is a fee charged for the transfer of children to and from the Beechworth Community Childcare Centre and BM. The transfer is undertaken by qualified BM staff outside their normal duties and a fee is necessary to partially cover this cost. Parents wishing to access this service should notify the Finance Manager at the beginning of term.

3.9 Fee structure

This is set out in the attached fee schedule.

4. Enrolment and Membership Application and Fee

A parent, legal guardian or primary carer wishing to enrol a child into Cycle 1, 2 or 3 of BM must complete both an Enrolment Application Form and a Membership Application Form and pay a fee of \$50 per child. This fee is non refundable.

5. Acceptance Bond

From 2010 all new families with a child commencing at BM in Cycle 1, 2 or 3 for the first time are required to pay a bond of \$700. This bond is payable upon acceptance of the child as a student at BM and is fully refundable when the child ceases to attend BM provided:

- the correct notice of withdrawal is given (ie 1 term or 12 weeks notice in writing)
- all fees owed by the family to BM have been paid in full including all tuition fees, the annual maintenance and fund raising fee(or work in lieu of same has already been performed in full) and any childcare transfer fees.

Any outstanding fees owed to BM will be deducted from the acceptance bond and the balance refunded. If fees owed exceed the bond then no refund will be made and any shortfall will remain due and payable and recoverable as a debt to BM.

6. Building Fund

At a Strategic Planning Day conducted at BM in 2009 a motion was passed that BM work toward establishing a purpose built facility. With this in mind, in 2010, BM will establish a Building Fund which will be used exclusively for the future development and growth of the school.

Donations to the Building fund will be tax deductible and whilst donations to the fund will be voluntary all families are asked to consider making a \$100 donation to the fund twice a year (in terms 2 and 4). Alternatively parents will be asked to donate the maintenance or fund raising fee back to the building fund in circumstances where they would otherwise be entitled to these fees by way of a refund in Term 4.

Whilst government building grants are available they can only be accessed by schools that either own their own premises or have a long term lease over premises as well as capital of their own to contribute to any proposed development.

Accordingly without the establishment of a building fund and donations by present members to such a fund BM has little prospect of ever realising its goal to operate from a purpose built facility.

7. Fund Management

7.1 Setting fees

The FSC will set fees for the programs each year, taking into consideration:

- The financial viability of the centre
- The fees charged by similar centres in the area.
- Level of government funding provided for the programs.
- The capacity of parents/guardians to pay.

The FSC may review and change the fees during the year if the financial viability of the individual

programs, or the centre is at risk.

7.2 Refunds due to Cancellation of Tuition

Fees are non-refundable except for families who have paid for the full year and provide 12 weeks or 1 terms written notice to the Principal of their departure. If the departure is during the final term no refund will be available. Refunds are provided on a pro-rata basis. The committee may consider a partial refund in other limited circumstances.

There will be no refund of fees due to a child's illness; family holiday during operational times; closure of the centre for one or more days when a qualified staff member is absent and a qualified reliever is not available; closure of the centre for staff training days.

7.3 Payment of accounts

All families must complete and sign a fee payment agreement form (Appendix 2), which outlines the fees to be paid and conditions for payment, prior to the child commencing at the centre.

Fees will be invoiced and mailed to families and must be paid by the date indicated on the invoice. Each invoice will be accompanied by payment instructions. Please note that the first instalment of fees must be received prior to the child commencing at the centre together with payment of the Acceptance Bond for all new families with a child commencing at BM in 2010 or thereafter in Cycle 1, 2 or 3.

If you are experiencing financial hardship, please contact the Finance Manager to discuss a payment plan.

Method of payment

Details of payment will be specified on the invoice. Payment will be made by cash, cheque or direct credit. Payment plans, where fees are paid in instalments, are available and must be negotiated directly with the Finance Manager.

Issue of receipts

Receipts will be provided for all payments and issued within one week of receipt of payment. Receipts will be placed in children's pigeonholes unless requested otherwise.

7.4 Unpaid fees

If fees are not paid by the due date, the Finance Manager will initiate a process to recover fees as set out in 'Guidelines for Unpaid Fees'.

The committee reserves the right to take action to recover debts owing to the centre. This can include the engagement of debt collectors to recover the monies owed on behalf of the centre.

Where a family owes a substantial amount of money to BM, no further placements in programs will be provided to any child in the family, until all outstanding monies are paid, or a payment plan is agreed to by both parties.

7.5 Late enrolments

Please note, if a child is enrolled after the start of the kindergarten or primary school year, the first instalment of fees and Acceptance Bond (if applicable) must be received by the committee before the child can commence attendance. When a child commences within 2 weeks of the start of the term, 100% of that term's fees are payable. Between weeks 3-5 75% of the terms fees are payable and thereafter 50% of the terms fees.

8. Procedures

The Finance Sub Committee is responsible for:

- Implementing and reviewing this policy, in consultation with the parents/guardians and staff.
- Setting fees according to the guidelines outlined in this policy.
- Providing a copy of the fee schedule to all parents/guardians and making the *Fees Policy* available at the centre.
- Overseeing the collection and receipting of all fees as per the guidelines outlined in this policy.

The FSC will comply with the centre's *Privacy Policy* in regard to any information it receives relating to the

parents/guardians financial situation and the payment/non-payment of fees.

The parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Reading the fee policy and fee schedule.
- Signing and complying with the fee payment agreement form.
- Notifying the Finance Manager if experiencing difficulties in payment of fees.
- Providing the required documentation at the end of each term for relevant fee subsidies (eg. Health Care Card holders).

9. Authorisation

This policy was adopted by the Beechworth Montessori committee, at the committee meeting on 12 August 2009.

10. Review date

This policy will be reviewed annually, or varied earlier if necessary, and the FSC will within 28 days of making any change, notify the parents/guardians of the children attending, of that change.

11. Evaluation

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes the FSC will:

- Assess the effectiveness of the process for the collection of fees.
- If appropriate, conduct a survey in relation to this policy or incorporate relevant questions within the general parents/guardians survey.
- Monitor complaints and incidents regarding the policy.
- Review the number of occasions families/children have been excluded from BM due to non-payment of fees.

Beechworth Montessori
FEE SCHEDULE 2010

Tiny Tots (0-3 year olds)

Session/week	Fee
Unlimited*	\$60 per term
Casual	\$10 per session per child

No restriction on number of children per family attending each session

Cycle 1 (Preschool, 3, 4 & 5 year olds and Prep)

Age	Sessions	Term Fee
3 year old	Option A 3 days x 3hrs (9am to 12noon)*	\$550
	Option B 5 days x 3hrs (9am to 12noon)*	\$700
	*Children transferring to Childcare will stay to 1.00pm and need to bring their own lunch	
4 year old	Option A 5 days x 4hrs (9am to 1.00pm) Children to bring own lunch	\$750
	Option B 3 days x 5hrs (9am to 2.00pm) Children to bring own lunch	\$750
5 year old (For children not yet in the Prep program)	Option A 5 days x 4hrs (9am to 1pm) Children to bring own lunch	\$750
	Option B (At the request of the parent and at the discretion of the Teacher) Extended Days (9am to 3.15pm) Children to bring own lunch	\$850
Prep	5 days (9am to 3.15pm) Children to bring own lunch	\$700

Cycle 2 & 3 (Primary School, 6-12 year olds)

Cycle	Term Fee
Cycle 2	\$700
Cycle 3	\$700

Maintenance Fee	\$100 per family per annum
Fundraising Fee	\$100 per family per annum
Childcare Transfer Fee	\$50 per child per term

A Beechworth Montessori Enrolment and Membership Fee of \$50 is payable when enrolling your child. This fee is non-refundable.

An Acceptance Bond of \$700 is payable by each new family with a child commencing in Cycle 1, 2 or 3 in 2010. This fee is fully refundable but conditions apply (see Para 5).