

# 2023 Fee Policy

**Date Approved by Committee of Management:** 16/11/2022

**Date for review:** 16/11/2023

## PURPOSE

Beechworth Montessori School is committed to responsible financial management, which includes setting fees that will result in a financially viable organisation whilst keeping enrolment fees at the lowest possible level. This policy document provides a clear set of guidelines for the setting, payment and collection of fees. The guidelines ensure the ongoing financial viability of the school and the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided.

## SCOPE

The Fee Policy applies to staff, committee and parents/guardians whose child/ren are attending, or who wish to enrol a child/ren at Beechworth Montessori School.

## POLICY STATEMENT

Beechworth Montessori School is an independent school that aims to provide the highest quality authentic Montessori education by providing the best possible Montessori educators and learning environment. This includes a commitment to two educators per classroom in Cycle 1, and two educators per classroom in Cycle 2 rooms with over 20 enrolments. Cycle 3 staffing is considered based on student learning needs and enrolment numbers.

The school is responsible for all of the operational costs associated with providing the learning environment and the teaching and administration staff. Generally speaking, 70% of our funding each year comes from the State/Federal Governments and 30% from school fees.

For primary school-aged children various state/federal government departments contribute funding (based upon the number of enrolments and other related criteria), but fees remain necessary due to the cost of delivering the various programs including subsidising early years education at Beechworth Montessori. The Victorian Department of Education and Training also provides funding as a contribution toward the cost of operating the 3 and 4 year old kindergarten program.

The school:

- Implements a fair process for managing circumstances where fees are in arrears or members are experiencing economic hardship.
- Maintains confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents/guardians.
- Uses discretion to withdraw service for non-payment of fees.

## DEFINITIONS

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Fees                             | A payment for a place within a program at the centre.  |
| Educational Care Program (ECP)   | A non-government funded, education and care program for children aged from 24 months and up to and including kindergarten children     |
| Unfunded 3 year old Kindergarten | A non-government funded, early childhood educational program, for children who are 3 after 30 April (Cycle 1)                          |
| Funded 3 year old Kindergarten   | A state government funded, early childhood educational program, for children who are 3 before 30 April (Cycle 1)                       |
| Funded 4 year old Kindergarten   | A state government funded, early childhood educational program, for children in the year prior to commencing primary school (Cycle 1). |

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Primary School        | Funded by state and/or federal government for children Prep to Year 6 (Cycle 1, 2 and 3)                         |
| Building Fund Levy    | A levy to assist funding future capital works  |
| Security Deposit      | A requirement to secure and maintain enrolment in the primary school   |
| Finance Sub Committee | Comprises the Principal, Finance Manager and Treasurer and/or other Committee of Management member as appointed. |

## IMPLEMENTATION

### 1. Fee subsidy for low income families with HCC or PCC

The Victorian Government may provide assistance for a primary-age child, whose parent/guardian holds a current Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card. When provided by the Government this assistance is passed onto eligible applicants through a reduction in their fees. **The supporting documentation must be sighted by the Finance Manager as it is updated.** Please contact office staff for more information about HCC or PCC assistance.

### 2. Fee subsidy for siblings

The following discounts have been set for children from the same family:

|                      |               |
|----------------------|---------------|
| First child          | Full price    |
| Second child         | 20% discount  |
| Third child          | 30% discount  |
| Any further children | 50 % discount |

This discount does not apply to ECP, the Security Deposit or to children of staff.

### 3. Fee subsidy for staff

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

### 4. Financial Assistance Program

The purpose of the Beechworth Montessori School Financial Assistance Program (FAP) is to provide children with the opportunity to access Montessori education. It is available for funded 3 and 4 year olds and school children only.

For families to qualify for the Financial Assistance Program, they must be able to demonstrate:

- a) They are genuinely experiencing financial hardship.
- b) As a result of financial hardship their children will be unable to attend Beechworth Montessori School without financial assistance.

The Beechworth Montessori School Finance Sub Committee will assess each application on its merits to decide whether the Financial Assistance Program will be offered such as:

- a) Deferment of fees by negotiation, and/or
- b) An agreement to provide goods or services to the value of the fees owing, and/or
- c) Discretionary reduction of fees, and/or
- d) The applicant may be asked to volunteer their time or skill as a demonstration of a reciprocal commitment to the education of their children.

Applications are reviewed on an annual basis or as agreed with the Finance Sub Committee unless the applicant's situation changes within that period. At that time the applicant should inform the Principal or Finance Manager of the change in their circumstances and the Finance Sub Committee 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.

### 5. Extended Absence Holding Fee

In the case of extended nonattendance (in excess of 4 weeks) families can request in writing to pay a holding fee in lieu of school fees. The holding fee is equal to 50% of fees for the period of absence.

### 6. Building Fund Levy

A Building Fund levy is payable annually per family. This amount is specified in the Fees Schedule.

## **7. Membership of Association**

A parent, legal guardian or primary carer wishing to enrol a child into the Cycle 1, 2 or 3 programs at Beechworth Montessori School must complete a Membership Application Form and pay a fee of \$50 per child. This fee is non-refundable.

## **8. Setting fees**

- a) The Committee of Management will set school fees each year, taking into consideration the financial viability of the school and the level of government funding provided for the programs.
- b) The Committee of Management may review and change the fees during the year if the financial viability of the individual programs or the school is at risk.

## **9. Security Deposit**

- a) The security deposit secures a place for the child at Beechworth Montessori School.
- b) Payment of the security deposit is to be made by Term 4 in the year preceding initial enrolment at the primary school.
- c) The security deposit is equivalent to one (1) term's primary school fee.
- d) The security deposit is retained for each year your child is enrolled.
- e) If you withdraw your child(ren) before the end of any calendar year the security deposit is forfeited.
- f) Notice to leave must be given by the end of term 3, failure to provide notice will result in the forfeiting of the security deposit.

## **10. Cancellation of Tuition**

- a) An enrolment is for the full calendar year, meaning fees are due for the entire year. Should you withdraw your child(ren) before completing the full year, the full year fees are still payable. Special circumstances may apply.
- b) If the child(ren) is not continuing in the subsequent year, then the family needs to provide notice by the end of term 3 of the current year.
- c) Where a permanent place is booked in the ECP program fees will be charged regardless of attendance unless it is due to a change in the child's Cycle 1 schedule.

## **11. Payment of accounts**

- a) All families must complete and sign a Fee Payment Agreement form which outlines the acceptance of the Fees Policy and Fee Agreement; enrolling for the full year and that camps and excursions once the family has committed are non-refundable.
- b) Fees will be invoiced as requested in the Fee Payment Agreement and must be paid by the date indicated on the invoice. Each invoice will be accompanied by payment instructions.

## **12. Payment timing options**

The following payment timing options are available:

- a) Weekly or fortnightly, payable through SentralPay through the parent's Sentral log in .
- b) Whole year, payable by 31 March with 5% discount
- c) Term invoice paid by week 4 of each term

## **13. Method of payment**

- a) Whole Year and Term fees can be paid by cash, cheque or Visa/Mastercard at the school office. Payment by credit card attracts a 1.64 % surcharge, which is added to the payment. Payments made by cash, cheque or EFTPOS (Debit Card) do not incur additional fees.
- b) Weekly or fortnightly payment option is payable via Sentral login. SentralPay allows the automatic, regular payment of fees fortnightly from bank account or credit card. Any credit card payments through SentralPay for VISA and Mastercard incur a 1.87% surcharge and AMEX incurs a 4.4% surcharge. If the SentralPay payment is dishonoured, the dishonour fee will be charged to your bank or credit card.

## **14. Unpaid fees**

- a) If any outstanding fees are not paid in full by the due date, except where there is a payment plan approved by the Finance Sub Committee, Beechworth Montessori School reserves the right to commence debt recovery and/or withdraw enrolment.

- b) If fees are not paid or no payment plan is made by the due date, the Finance Manager will initiate a process to understand the reason(s) for the non-payment and obtain the outstanding fees. The steps are:
  - 1 week overdue: Email statement and request to family.
  - 2 weeks overdue: Telephone call to family.
  - If the debt remains unpaid or the payment plan is ignored, the debt becomes a Finance Sub-committee agenda item.
  - The Finance Manager and Principal may request that the family sets up a payment plan via Ezidebit to ensure regular payment.
- c) If a payment plan or arrangement is not followed and no acceptable reason is given for the non-payment then the Finance Sub Committee reserves the right to take action to recover debts owing to the school. This can include the engagement of debt collectors to recover the monies owed on behalf of the school. In the event where an overdue account is referred to a collection agency and/or law firm, the named party will be liable for all costs which would be incurred as if the debt is collected in full, including legal demand costs. The current debt recovery commission is 8% and if judgement is required these costs will be added to the debt.
- d) Where a family owes a substantial amount of money to BMS, 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.

#### **15. Late enrolments**

If a child is enrolled after the start of the kindergarten or primary school year, the first instalment of fees will be invoiced upon the child commencing 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 term's fees.

#### **16. The Committee of Management is responsible for:**

- a) Reviewing this policy and setting fees according to the guidelines outlined in this policy.
- b) Overseeing the collection and receipting of all fees as per the guidelines outlined in this policy.

The Committee of Management and Finance Sub Committee 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.

#### **17. The parents/guardians are responsible for:**

- a) Signing and complying with the Fee Payment Agreement.
- b) Notifying the Finance Manager if experiencing difficulties in payment of fees.
- c) Providing the required documentation as required for relevant fee subsidies (eg. Health Care Card holders).

#### **18. Authorisation**

The ECP, Cycle 1, 2 & 3 fees listed in the Beechworth Montessori School Fee Schedule 2021 were adopted by the Beechworth Montessori Committee of Management, on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2021.

#### **19. Review date**

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

#### **20. Evaluation**

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes, the Beechworth Montessori School Committee of Management will:

- a) Assess the effectiveness of the process for the collection of fees.
- b) If appropriate, conduct a survey in relation to this policy or incorporate relevant questions within the general parents/guardian's satisfaction survey.
- c) Monitor complaints and incidents regarding the policy.
- d) Review the number of occasions families/children have been excluded from Beechworth Montessori due to non-payment of fees.