



FEE POLICY

Date

12 December 2019

Review Date

Annually

Policy Statement

Values

Montessori Early Education Centre (MEEC) 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 how preschools are funded 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.

Scope

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

Background and legislation

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides per capita funding as a contribution toward the cost of operating a preschool program for children in the year before school. For MEEC, this means DET provides partial funding for the total number of children in the 2nd year of Sessional and Cycle 1 programs only. There is no funding for Early Starters.

The centre itself is responsible for all operational costs.

Fees are necessary because there is a shortfall between the level of government funding and the costs of operating a viable preschool.

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



DHS requires that funded centres have in place, and communicate to families, a comprehensive written fee policy.

Legislation

- *In accordance with the Children's Services Regulations 2010*
 - MEEC is required to display the fees charged in the main entrance of the Centre. Since each classroom has its own foyer, fees are clearly displayed on one of the notice boards in these foyers.
 - MEEC is required to have information available on the arrangements for the payment of fees. This is published as part of our Terms and Conditions of Enrolment which is available online at <https://donvalemeeec.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Enrol-Termcond-2017PDF.pdf>.

Definitions

- **Commencement Bond:** A payment that secures a place that has been offered in a program at the centre.
- **Enrolment application fee:** A payment, to accompany the enrolment application of a child for a place in a program at the centre.
- **Fees:** A payment for a place within a program at the centre.
- **Kindergarten / Preschool:** A universal early childhood educational program. For MEEC, it is only partially funded by DHS as above.
- **Levy:** A payment made in lieu of parents/guardians involvement in specific activities, for example, maintenance.

Procedures

The 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 the Fees Schedule of this policy.
- The 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.

The parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Reading the fee policy summary and fee schedule.
- Requesting an extension from the Administrator if experiencing difficulties in payment of fees and/or initiating an Ezi Debit payment plan to cover term fees.
- Providing the required documentation at the start of each term for relevant fee subsidies.

The administrator is responsible for:

- Collecting and receipting all fees as per the guidelines outlined in Fees Schedule of this policy.
- Providing a copy of the Fees Policy with the Fees Schedule to all parents/guardians if asked and making copies available at the centre.



- Advising staff as to when a child may be unable to attend the centre if fee payments have not been received.

Related documents

- *DHS Victorian Kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria*
- The centre's constitution
- Centre policies
 - Complaints
 - Delivery and Collection of Children
 - Terms and Conditions of Enrolment
 - Privacy

Authorisation

This policy was adopted by the Montessori Early Education Centre committee, at the committee meeting on 12 December 2019.

Review date

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

Evaluation

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes the committee 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.
- Take into account feedback from the Administrator and all staff regarding the policy.
- Monitor complaints and incidents regarding the policy.
- Review the number of occasions families/children have been excluded from the centre because of non-payment of fees.

Policy Unpaid fees

MEEC will publish invoice due dates at the beginning of each year. A reminder will be sent via MEEC's communication system 7 days before **invoices** are circulated, confirming the due date of the invoice to follow. Invoices are generally sent on the **last day of term**, and payment due dates will generally be the **first day of term**, unless specified otherwise.

If fees are not paid by the due date:

1. A reminder will be sent to parents with outstanding invoices on the last day of Week 1.
2. If a parent foresees issues with paying the invoice by the due date, it is the parent's responsibility to approach the Administrator for the arrangement of a Ezi Debit payment plan or payment extension. This will avoid late fees being added to the invoice.



3. From Week 2, a weekly late fee as published in the Schedule of Fees will automatically be added to outstanding invoices.
4. If the invoice remains unpaid at the start of Week 3, the Administrator will ask the parent to go on an Ezi debit payment plan for the outstanding invoice and late fees.
5. If the invoice remains unpaid at the start of Week 4 without a prior payment plan arrangement, a letter will be sent to the parent confirming that the child/ren will be unable to attend the Centre until all outstanding fees have been paid.
6. If a signed payment plan is not adhered to, a follow-up process will commence at point 3.
7. Where a family owes any amount of money overdue to the centre, 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.

Debt recovery

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.