

Thomas More Christian Montessori School

Mrs. Donna McCulloch, Principal
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(02) 6492 2913

Fees Policy 2025

1. Policy Statement and Definitions

Values

Thomas More Christian Montessori (TMC) School is committed to:

- Providing responsible financial management of the school, which includes setting fees that will result in a financially viable school 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 school about kindergarten and school funding models and that they are reliant on parent fees to operate the school.
- Complying with all legislative requirements.

Purpose

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

Definitions

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

Parent/Toddler Program (Montessori Playgroup and More): A program for toddlers and their parent(s) to be introduced to the Montessori Method. For two hours per week the toddler and parent are able to come and work with the age appropriate Montessori Materials under the guidance of a trained Montessori Assistant.

K-2, K-1: An unfunded early childhood educational program for children aged 3 and 4. These are the first two years of the Cycle 1 Montessori Program.

Kindergarten: A universal early childhood educational program, funded by the State and/or Federal Government for children who turn 5 by August 1st. This is the third and final year of the Cycle 1 Montessori Program.

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

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Finance Committee: Comprises the Principal, Business Assistant, Bookkeeper and School Board Members.

2. Scope

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

3. Background

3.1 Why fees are necessary

The Federal Government via the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) as well as the State Government provide funding for school age children as a recurrent grant. TMCM School 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 our K-1, K-2, and Parent/Toddler Program. Fees are necessary because there is a shortfall between the level of government funding and the costs of operating a viable Parent/Toddler, Kindergarten and Primary school.

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

3.2 Holding Fee

A holding fee of 50% of the period of non-attendance for each child is payable by families wanting to hold a place during extended non-attendance (in excess of 4 weeks). This must be pre-arranged by request in writing to the Principal.

3.3 Fee Structure

This is set out in the attached fee schedule.

4. Fee Discount for Siblings

A discount of 50% per first sibling and 75% per second 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 in the non-funded programs.

5. Membership Application & Enrolment Form and Fee

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

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6. Acceptance Bond

All new families with a child commencing at TMCM School in Cycle 1, for the first time, will be required to pay an Acceptance Bond (per family) of the amount specified in the Fee Schedule. This bond is payable upon acceptance of the child as a student at TMCM School and is fully refundable when the child ceases to attend TMCM School provided:

- The child has completed the final year of Cycle 1 (the year he/she turns 5 by August 1st)
- The correct notice of withdrawal is given (i.e. 1 term or 12 weeks in writing)
- All fees owed by the family to TMCM School have been paid in full (or work in lieu of same has already been performed in full).
- Any outstanding fees owed to TMCM School 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 TMCM School.

New families of a child commencing in Cycle 2 or 3 will also be required to pay the bond. This is fully refundable provided:

- The correct notice of withdrawal is given (i.e. 1 term or 12 weeks in writing)
- All fees owed by the family to TMCM School have been paid in full (or work in lieu of same has already been performed in full)
- Any outstanding fees owed to TMCM School 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 TMCM School.

7. Building Fund and Tax-Deductible Gifts.

TMCM School has established a Building Fund and has become registered with the Australian Tax Office as a Deductible Gift Recipient. This means that gifts to the Building Fund are tax deductible. All families are asked to consider making donations to the fund. All donations should be paid into the Building Fund Bank account.

8. Fund Management

8.1 Setting Fees

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

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

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.

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8.2 Refunds due to Cancellation of Tuition

Fees are non-refundable except for families who have paid for the full year and provide written notice of their departure 1 term or 12 weeks in advance to the Principal. 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 school for one or more days when a qualified staff member is absent, and a qualified reliever is not available; closure of the school for staff training days, closure due to unforeseeable circumstances such as flood or building damage.

8.3 Payments of accounts

All families must complete and sign a Fee Payment Agreement Form which outlines the fees to be paid and conditions for payment, prior to the child commencing at the school and then annually.

Fees will be invoiced and delivered to families and must be paid by the date indicated on the invoice upon the child commencing at the school, together with payment of the Acceptance Bond for all new families with a child commencing at TMCM School in Cycle 1, 2 or 3.

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

Method of payment

Fees can be paid nominating any of the following methods:

- Term invoice
- Fortnightly direct deposit
- Direct debit payment plan
- Whole year paid at the commencement of Term 1, with 5% discount
- Individual payment plans as negotiated directly with the Principal

ANZ Bank
BSB 012 525
Account Number 3531 32594

8.4 Unpaid fees

If fees are not paid by the due date, the Principal will initiate a process to recover fees. The 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.

Where a family owes a substantial amount of money to TMCM School, 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.

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8.5 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) 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 term's fees are payable and thereafter 50% of the term's fees.

9. Procedures

The Committee of Management 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 school.
- Overseeing the collection and receipting of all fees as per the guidelines outlined in this policy.

The Committee of Management and Finance Committee will comply with the school's Privacy Policy in regard to any information it receives relating to the parents/guardian's 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 Principal if experiencing difficulties in payment of fees.

10. Review date

This policy will be reviewed annually, or varied earlier if necessary and the Finance Committee 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 TMCM School Finance 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/ guardian's satisfaction survey.
- Monitor complaints and incidents regarding the policy.
- Review the number of occasions families/children have been excluded from TMCM School due to non-payment of fees.