

DIOCESE OF PALMERSTON NORTH

ATTENDANCE DUES GUIDELINES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 All Catholic schools in New Zealand (including those in the Diocese of Palmerston North) are state integrated schools under the Education Act 1989.
- 1.2 The Education Act means that the proprietors of integrated schools can charge attendance dues and imposes a legal obligation on parents or other people (“dues payers”) who have, by signing Attendance Dues Agreements, accepted as a condition of enrolment, responsibility for the education of students enrolled at and attending integrated schools.
- 1.3 “Proprietors”, are those who have primary responsibility for determining and maintaining the special character of integrated schools and who own (or hold in trust or lease) the land and buildings that constitute school premises.
- 1.4 There are five proprietors in the Diocese of Palmerston North.
Bishop Charles Drennan, the Bishop of Palmerston North is the proprietor of all 28 primary schools in the Diocese and the following secondary schools:
 1. Cullinane College, Whanganui
 2. St John’s College, Hastings; and
 3. St Peter’s College, Palmerston North; and
 4. Sacred Heart College, Napier.

Four other proprietors, own Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Palmerston North:

1. Trust Board of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in New Zealand (Francis Douglas Memorial College, New Plymouth)
 2. Mission College New Plymouth Trust Board (Sacred Heart College, New Plymouth)
 3. St Joseph’s Maori Girls College Trust Board (St Joseph’s Maori Girls College, Napier)
 4. Hato Paora Trust Board (Hato Paora College, Feilding)
- 1.5 In these Attendance Dues Guidelines, the term “proprietors” refers to the proprietors of integrated Catholic schools in the Diocese of Palmerston North only.

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2.0 NEED FOR ATTENDANCE DUES

- 2.1 The proprietors in the Diocese of Palmerston North belong to a National Attendance Dues Scheme which services loans for its members, enabling them to fund new school building work. These loans are repaid from attendance dues. Each year, approximately 80% of attendance dues collected on behalf of the proprietors of Catholic schools is used to service loans.
- 2.2 The balance of attendance dues collected on behalf of the proprietors in the Diocese of Palmerston North is used to pay insurance on integrated school buildings, collection costs and some building-related costs.
- 2.3 Proprietors need the highest possible level of payment of attendance dues to ensure they are able to make their required payments to the National Attendance Dues Scheme and pay all other expenses since attendance dues are the only way of sustaining the Catholic school network.
- 2.4 Nevertheless, it is the pastoral practice of proprietors in the Diocese of Palmerston North that no “preference student” will be denied access to an integrated Catholic school because of the inability of their dues payers to pay attendance dues in full.

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3.0 COLLECTING ATTENDANCE DUES IN THE DIOCESE OF PALMERSTON NORTH

- 3.1 The proprietors in the Diocese of Palmerston North have agreed that their schools shall be a group of schools for the purpose of establishing attendance dues under the Integration Act. The Proprietors meet together in a group called “DPN Proprietor’s Group”.
- 3.2 The DPN Proprietor’s Group have authorised the Diocese of Palmerston North to collect attendance dues in respect of the group of schools from 1 January 2015 and to maintain a fund into which will be paid the attendance dues collected in respect of students attending all schools in the group and from which all national dues and regional expenses will be paid.
- 3.3 The Diocese of Palmerston North is undertaking the collection of attendance dues in-house through its attendance dues team (the DPN Attendance Dues team).
- 3.4 The Proprietors recognise that the DPN Attendance Dues team will require assistance at a local level from people able to provide presence and local knowledge as necessary.

In consultation with its local primary school/s every parish is asked to appoint attendance dues adviser/s to work collaboratively with the DPN attendance dues team.

Colleges are also asked to appoint attendance dues advisors to work collaboratively with the DPN Attendance Dues team and the local parish dues advisers where necessary

- 3.5 The DPN Attendance Dues team will work with the local attendance dues advisers to administer hardship rebates (and write-off arrears) for dues payers in circumstances where paying full attendance dues would result in genuine and undue hardship on the family of the applicant.
- 3.6 These guidelines have been approved by the proprietors in the Diocese of Palmerston North who expect parish priests, lay pastoral leaders, school principals and attendance dues advisers to co-operate with each other and operate in accordance with them.

4.0 ENROLMENT OF STUDENTS AT INTEGRATED CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE DIOCESE OF PALMERSTON NORTH

- 4.1 A student is not validly enrolled at any integrated Catholic school in the Diocese of Palmerston North unless and until the student's dues payers have signed an attendance dues agreement with the proprietor of the school concerned, using Form B, thereby agreeing, as a condition of enrolment, to pay attendance dues in respect of the student.
- 4.2 It is the responsibility of the principal of every integrated Catholic school in the Diocese of Palmerston North to ensure that an attendance dues agreement signed by the dues payers concerned has been obtained in respect of every student attending their school.
- 4.3 It is also the principal's responsibility to ensure that:
- (1) Enrolment forms and procedures are fully and accurately completed for all new students.
 - (2) Dues payers are fully informed about attendance dues and their obligations to pay them. The information in Form A can be used for this purpose
 - (3) Dues payers are advised of the different ways in which attendance dues can be paid and the options for paying by instalments. Refer to Form C. Automatic payment authorities (Form C1) or Credit/Debit Card remittances (Form C2) must be completed and signed by dues payers who choose to make their payments by that means.
 - (4) The attendance dues agreement and all other information required in order to charge attendance dues on behalf of the proprietor is promptly forwarded to the DPN Attendance Dues team.
 - (5) The DPN Attendance Dues team is promptly notified of any changes in enrolment information.
- 4.4 Student Enrolment Information and the Privacy Act 1993
- (1) Personal information will be collected and held by proprietors and the DPN Attendance Dues team as their collection agent, and used for administering the invoicing and collection of attendance dues and/or for assessing eligibility for any attendance dues rebate or write-off.
 - (2) Information about outstanding attendance dues may be disclosed to the proprietor of other integrated Catholic schools attended by children from the same family and that proprietor's collection agent. This information may be used for the purposes of collecting attendance dues and/or assessing eligibility for any rebate or write-off.

5.0 ATTENDANCE DUES ACCOUNTS

- 5.1 The level of attendance dues payable in respect of students attending all integrated Catholic schools in the Diocese of Palmerston North is reviewed annually.
- 5.2 All attendance dues accounts are sent to dues payers by the DPN Attendance Dues team.
- 5.3 Dues payers are expected to pay directly to the DPN Attendance Dues team and must do so promptly. The accepted methods of payment are automatic payment, internet banking, credit and debit card, and cheques. If dues payers pay their attendance dues to the school or parish, the money is to be receipted and immediately sent on to the DPN Attendance Dues team with details of who paid it.
- 5.4 DPN Attendance Dues team Contact Information
 - (1) Address: Diocesan Centre, 33 Amesbury Street, Palmerston North.
Please ask for a team member at Reception.
 - (2) Postal address: Private Bag 11-012, Palmerston North 4442
 - (3) Email: dues@pndiocese.org.nz
 - (4) Phone: 06 3503825 or 0800 200 208
 - (5) Website: www.pndiocese.org.nz/dues

6.0 APPOINTMENT OF ATTENDANCE DUES ADVISERS

- 6.1 Responsibility for the administration of attendance dues lies with the proprietors who, in turn, have appointed the DPN Attendance Dues team as their agent to carry out this task.
- 6.2 As noted in clause 3.4, the DPN Attendance Dues team needs local assistance with this task. For that reason every parish and college is asked to appoint attendance dues advisers to assist the DPN Attendance Dues team.
- 6.3 Parishes or colleges must, annually, provide the DPN Attendance Dues team with the name, address, contact phone numbers and email addresses of attendance dues advisers appointed for the parish or college.
- 6.4 Parish attendance dues advisers should be appointed by the parish priest or lay pastoral coordinator (preferably on the recommendation or with the assistance of the parish finance committee) but may be appointed by the proprietor of the school or by someone authorised by the proprietor of the school to make such appointments. The payment of attendance dues for all primary students residing in the parish is to be the concern of parish attendance dues advisers.
- It is recommended that the principal of their primary schools (and/or people recommended by the principal) be appointed as parish attendance dues advisers.
- 6.5 College attendance dues advisers should be appointed by the college principal (on the recommendation or with assistance of one or more of the proprietor's appointees on the College Board of Trustees) but may be appointed by the proprietor of the college or by someone authorised by the proprietor to make such appointments. The payment of attendance dues for all students attending the college is to be the concern of college attendance dues advisers.
- It is recommended that college principals (or their nominees) and one or more of the proprietor's appointee on the College Board of Trustees be appointed as college attendance dues advisers.
- 6.6 Every parish and college should appoint as many attendance dues advisers as they consider are necessary to enable the work to be carried out effectively.
- 6.7 Attendance dues advisers shall have authority to individually undertake any and all of the tasks and responsibilities of attendance dues advisers expressed or implied by these guidelines but only in respect of the parishes or colleges they were appointed to.

7.0 ROLE OF ATTENDANCE DUES ADVISERS

- 7.1 The primary task of every attendance dues adviser is to use local presence and knowledge to facilitate the payment of attendance dues for the proprietors in respect of the parishes or colleges they were appointed to.
- 7.2 Attendance dues advisers will take all appropriate steps, e.g. letter, phone call or personal visit to dues payers whose attendance dues are in arrears, in order to determine how best to advise the DPN Attendance Dues team on action that should be taken. Where possible, attendance dues advisers should try to help dues payers to manage the arrears. If there are pastoral considerations that should be taken into account, the parish priest or lay pastoral coordinator should be consulted.
- 7.3 An attendance dues adviser may, after examining the circumstances of each case, decide that the best option is one or more of the following:
- the dues payer should pay off the arrears in one lump sum;
 - the arrears, in whole or in part, should be paid off by instalments, preferably by automatic payment, at a rate agreed on with the dues payer;
 - a hardship rebate should be processed;
 - and/or arrears should, in part, be written off;
 - or some other option.
- 7.4 The decision is to be conveyed to the DPN Attendance Dues team so that they can action and/or update the payer's records.
- 7.5 An attendance dues adviser who considers that debt should be put into the hands of a debt collecting agency will make a recommendation to that effect to the DPN Attendance Dues team. For its part, the DPN Attendance Dues team will not refer any debt to a debt collecting agency unless such action has been recommended by an attendance dues adviser or approved by the proprietor of the school concerned.
- 7.6 The Education Act authorises suspension of students on the grounds of non-payment of attendance dues. If exceptional circumstances warranting suspension are thought to exist the case is to be presented to the DPN Attendance Dues team for the consideration and decision of the proprietor of the school concerned.
- 7.7 Parishes in the Diocese of Palmerston North are not required to make up for attendance dues that are unpaid or have been rebated or written off. However, several parishes generously provide funds to help families who have permanent or temporary difficulty paying their attendance dues. The DPN Proprietors Group commends the practice as helping to alleviate the burden otherwise borne by dues payers who pay their accounts in full and on time.

8.0 APPROVAL OF HARDSHIP REBATES AND ARREARS WRITE-OFFs

8.1 Introduction

- 8.1.1 Hardship rebates and the write-off of attendance dues arrears are a practical means of helping in circumstances where paying the full attendance due would result in genuine and undue hardship to a dues payer's family.
- 8.1.2 When approved, hardship rebates will reduce attendance dues owing for the current year. Write-offs will reduce arrears of attendance dues by the amount (or percentage) specified in the approval.
- 8.1.3 The granting of hardship rebates and write-offs is confidential.
- 8.1.4 Applicants for rebates or write-offs should be encouraged to discuss their circumstances with an attendance dues adviser appointed for their parish or college.
- 8.1.5 Parish and school personnel, if aware that a dues payer is facing hardship may bring this to the attention of an attendance dues adviser.
- 8.1.6 DPN Attendance Dues team, if aware that a dues payer is facing hardship shall be proactive in providing assistance and shall advise the local attendance dues adviser of action taken about the account.

8.2 Criteria for Approving Hardship Rebates and Write-offs

- 8.2.1 A hardship rebate and/or write-off may be approved or recommended by an attendance dues adviser in circumstances where paying the full attendance due would result in genuine and undue hardship on the family of the dues payer.
- 8.2.2 The decision or recommendation is communicated to the DPN Attendance Dues team who will review and collate for the Proprietor's representatives to review periodically.
- 8.2.3 Hardship rebates may be granted in the following circumstances:
 - (1) Loss of income/redundancy,
 - (2) Death of the main income earner,
 - (3) Extended unemployment,
 - (4) Family reasons*, and
 - (5) Hardship.

* **N.B.** Including the number of children a family is paying attendance dues for.
- 8.2.4 Unless exceptional circumstances exist, hardship rebates will be granted in part only because all dues payers are expected to pay something.
- 8.2.5 The ability of dues payers to pay at least something needs to be carefully assessed. This statement applies to all applications and is as applicable to a dues payer's second or subsequent application as it is to the first. In addition, dues payers who receive a rebate and/or write-off should be informed that they will be expected to pay all attendance dues (or a greater portion of them) the following year unless exceptional circumstances are found to exist at that time.

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8.2.6 The DPN Attendance Dues team may, after consultation with the Proprietor's representatives, request that a hardship rebate or write-off application is revisited to fit within these guidelines where it appears the criteria has not been met or due process not correctly followed or completed. The consultation on revisiting the application will be with the attendance dues adviser(s).

8.3 Procedure for Approval: All Application

8.3.1 The procedure to be followed in processing applications for hardship rebates and write-offs is as follows:

- a) The dues payer is to complete and sign Form E. This form is downloadable from the DPN website and all attendance dues advisers should ensure they keep copies of it.
- b) An attendance dues adviser will meet with the dues payer, check the application form has been completed and ascertain that the criteria for assistance are met. The attendance dues adviser should then discuss the proposed level of assistance to be given with the dues payer.
- c) The attendance dues adviser should also reach agreement with the dues payer as to how any balance of attendance dues and/or arrears will be repaid. Form E1 should be used and the dues payer should be given a copy. If future payments are proposed to be made by automatic payment, the bank automatic payment form (E2) should also be completed.

8.3.2 After approving a hardship rebate or write-off, the attendance dues adviser must forward the completed forms to the DPN Attendance Dues team so the hardship rebate and/or write-off and payment arrangements can be recorded and the dues payer's attendance dues account adjusted.

8.3.3 In some circumstances (see clause 8.4 below), the attendance dues adviser will not be able to approve a hardship rebate or write-off. The attendance dues adviser should still follow the procedure in clause 8.3.1 but will make a recommendation (rather than a decision) on the appropriate action. The documentation is then sent to the DPN Attendance Dues team where the decision will be made.

8.3.4 An attendance dues adviser who declines an application for a hardship rebate or write-off or gives approval for an amount less than requested must record the decision and reasons for it on Form E and tell the dues payer.

8.4 Applications that cannot be approved by Attendance Dues Advisers

8.4.1 Unless the Proprietor has given prior written approval to an increase in the following limits, approval cannot be given for:

- (1) Hardship rebates and/or write-offs that will exceed 80% of the total attendance dues (including arrears) owing by the applicant.
- (2) Hardship rebates that will result in total hardship rebates exceeding 10% of total current dues charged for the relevant school that year.
- (3) Write-offs that will result in total arrears written off exceeding 5% of total current dues charged for the relevant school that year.

8.4.2 Prior written approvals can be requested through the DPN Attendance Dues team who will seek approval the Proprietors representative.

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8.5 Appeals: Objections to decisions on hardship rebate

- 8.5.1 A dues payer whose application for a rebate or write-off has been declined; or who is dissatisfied with the amount rebated or written may appeal against the decision.
- 8.5.2 A complaint that an attendance dues adviser or any other person in the parish or at the school or college has failed to act on a request for a hardship rebate or write-off may also be the subject of an appeal.
- 8.5.3 An appeal must be in writing and should explain what decision is being appealed against and why. The appeal should be forwarded to “Appeals Committee” c/o the DPN Attendance Dues team, Private Bag 11 012, Palmerston North 4442.
- 8.5.4 An appeal should be made as soon as possible after the decision appealed against was given. An appeal will not be invalidated by delay but delay without good reason is a factor an appeals committee may take into account when making a decision on the appeal.
- 8.5.5 Every appeal will be heard by an appeals committee appointed for the purpose by the DPN Proprietors Group.
- 8.5.6 The appeals committees will convene to hear the appeal and will invite the dues payer and the person whose decision is being appealed against, to attend and/or to provide additional information. Parties may be represented at the hearing by others if they wish. Provided invitations to attend were sent (and the parties given adequate time to respond), the appeals committee may proceed to hear and determine an appeal on the stipulated date even if one or both parties does not respond to the invitation to attend or provide additional information.
- 8.5.7 The DPN Attendance Dues team may provide the appeals committee with a background paper on issues relevant to the appeal. If so, a copy must be sent to both parties with the appeals committee invitation to attend the hearing of the appeal.
- 8.5.8 The appeals committee decision, which will be final, will be delivered in writing and posted to the dues payer and the person whose decision was appealed against.