

► CASE STUDY



# ST RITA'S COLLEGE: STREAMLINING THE PAYMENT PROCESS AND BOOSTING FEE COLLECTION WITH FACTS

## St Rita's College | Clayfield, Queensland

St Rita's College is an independent Catholic day school for girls from years 5-12. The school was established in 1926 by the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. St Rita's delivers a faith-filled education focused on engaging, inquisitive and passionate learning to more than 1,200 students. The college's motto – Virtue non Verbis – encourages students to become women of action.

### The challenge

Historically, St Rita's College had offered families the option to pay tuition fees via various channels, including direct deposit, direct debit, credit card over the phone, and even cheque. Less than half of families were on automatic payment plans, which meant the school had no visibility or certainty of when more than 50% of fee payments would arrive.

Tuition fees were largely managed via paper-based solutions, creating a significant administrative burden for the finance office. Direct debit agreements had to be renewed each year, so setup was an annual process for families and the school. Receipting of direct debit and credit card payments was also a tedious process with limited automation.

Leanne Cousins, Head of Finance at St Rita's College, explained: "We were essentially triple handling when it came to payment plans. Families would complete a form and return it to us, we'd collate this information and send it to our bank, and once the payments were set up, we'd go in and check they were correct. It was a time-consuming and manual process that wasn't PCI DSS compliant."

"Before FACTS, we had less than half of our families on automatic payment plans. Some used paper-based direct debit and credit card authorities, some paid annually up front, and the rest made ad hoc payments throughout the year."

– Leanne Cousins, Head of Finance  
St Rita's College



Any changes to bank details or payment amounts during the year meant creating a completely new payment plan. The school manually monitored its bank account for any failed payments, then contacted families to follow up, with arrears handled using an aged debtors report.

## The solution

Looking to streamline and automate their tuition fee management, St Rita's spoke to their local school network about their experiences. Two schools they connected with had been using FACTS Tuition Management since 2018; both gave the platform a glowing review.

After deciding to implement FACTS in October 2021, St Rita's worked closely with the FACTS team to deliver the rollout ready for the 2022 academic year. Focusing on proactive and regular communication with families was central to the quick and successful implementation of the new tuition management platform. So too, was the close working relationship between St Rita's and the FACTS team:

"We had almost daily calls for the first three or four weeks, working together to learn the system and resolve any issues. The level of support was excellent; our business manager says it was one of the most successful implementations the College has experienced," said Leanne.

## The results

Within the first year of implementing FACTS, around 80% of St Rita's families signed up to an automatic payment plan, up from less than 50% the year prior. This allowed the school to dramatically reduce the administration effort associated with managing tuition while halving the value of payments outstanding at the end of the school year.

"With all our billing in one place, both families and the school have a trusted, complete view of tuition fees and incidental payments. Whenever an event or excursion comes up, we use FACTS Forms to manage payments. In the past, different sports were often billed separately, which meant families didn't have one central place to go where they could see what was due and make payments," said Leanne.

"Cash flow forecasting and visibility is worlds away from where we were before FACTS – we used to largely rely on historical payment patterns. Families have told us they find the interface easy to navigate and appreciate the automatic reminders they get that payments are due or overdue. Before, there was a lag in becoming aware of expired credit cards or families who were struggling with their payments – now we have real-time visibility."

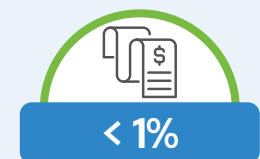
Looking forward, St Rita's plans to embed FACTS into their enrolment process as All Hallows' College has done. By managing enrolment fees and collecting commencement deposits via the platform, new families will be signed up to and familiar with FACTS upon joining the College.

"I love using FACTS. It's intuitive, and the support team are excellent. It integrates seamlessly with Synergetic (our school management system) and lets us quickly reconcile all balances and accounts anytime. If there isn't already a report that does what we want, the FACTS team is happy to create one for us."

- Lizzie Ciric, Finance Officer  
St Rita's College

"FACTS has been a game changer. It's supported us to automate so many manual processes – from collecting payments to receipting. In addition to providing a much better experience for all users, FACTS has had a dramatic impact on our uncollected fees. At the end of our first year using FACTS, outstanding payments were at 2%, down from 4% the previous year. At the mid-point of 2023, we're tracking at well under 1% of fees outstanding."

- Leanne Cousins, Head of Finance  
St Rita's College



Outstanding payments are down to less than 1%



80% of families signed up for automatic payments

