**Private schools trick parents into paying more**

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JEDDAH: Private schools have been devising new ways to raise money from parents to circumvent the Education Ministry’s cap on fee increases, a local publication reported here recently.  
Schools now charge for services that do not require the ministry’s approval including SR500 to SR1,000 for opening a new file for a student, up to SR2,000 for school uniforms, SR3,000 to SR4,000 for transport depending on the distance, and SR1,100 to SR2,500 for books.  
Sameer Al-Hakeem, manager of foreign education at the Jeddah Education Department, said these additional costs are up to 50 percent of the stipulated fees. Some schools announce that their fees are SR10,000 and then charge an extra SR5,000 for these additional items, without ministry oversight, he said.  
Malik Ghazi Taleb, chairman of the private and international school committee at the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI), said that schools should not charge for transport.  
“Parents have a choice in this regard and can choose not to send their children in the school bus.” The problem is the fees for opening new files, which the ministry is now asking schools to declare as part of the basic fee, he said.  
He said parents could avoid the high cost of private school tuition by placing their children in public schools. Many private schools have raised their fees because of additional insurance costs for the family members of teachers, which on average amounts to SR10,000.  
However, Taleb warned that schools failing to comply with the ministry’s regulations could face several penalties including not increasing fees for several years, or have their licenses suspended or revoked.  
He said the JCCI committee does not have any regulatory powers but can assist to mediate any conflict that may arise between parents and schools.