School Management Software Prices in Kenya: What Schools Should Expect to Pay

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Per-learner, flat licence or one-time fee? How Kenyan school software pricing models really work, the hidden costs to watch for, and a worked three-year cost example.

School management software in Kenya is sold under three main pricing models: a per-learner subscription (charged per student per term or per year), a flat annual licence for the whole school, or a one-time licence per student with a small annual maintenance fee. The sticker price is rarely the real cost — setup, training, SMS bundles and per-module add-ons can double what a school actually pays over three years. The only fair way to compare is to compute the total cost of ownership for your own student numbers.

This guide explains each pricing model, the hidden costs that catch bursars out, and a worked example you can copy with your own figures.

Who this guide is for

School owners, directors, headteachers and bursars comparing quotations, or preparing a software budget line for the board. If you are still deciding whether software is worth it at all, read our honest comparison of manual records and digital systems first.

The three pricing models you will be quoted

1. Per-learner subscription

The vendor charges a fixed amount per student per term or per year — for example, a figure in the range of KSh 50–150 per learner per term is common in this market. It scales fairly: a 200-student school pays a quarter of what an 800-student school pays. The trap is that the bill grows automatically every time your enrolment grows, and a "small" per-head figure becomes a large total at scale. Always multiply it by your projected numbers for three years, not this term's register.

2. Flat annual licence

One price covers the whole school regardless of size. Simple to budget, and it rewards growth — your cost per learner falls as you add students. Check the ceiling: some "flat" licences quietly cap the number of students or staff accounts, then charge for the overflow.

3. One-time licence plus maintenance

You pay a larger amount up front (or per admitted student once), then a smaller annual fee for hosting, backups and support. This is the model Mwalimu Ease uses: KSh 110 once for each newly admitted student, the first year's maintenance free, then a flat KSh 5,000 per year for the entire school from year two. Returning students cost nothing to re-enrol. The long-run maths usually favours schools that keep students for several years, because you pay for each child only once.

The hidden costs that change the real price

- **Setup and data migration.** Some vendors charge onboarding, training or per-record import fees. Ask what it costs to get your current register and marks history loaded.
- **SMS and communication bundles.** Many systems sell SMS credits separately, at a mark-up on the telco rate. A school sending three bulk SMS per term to 500 parents can spend more on messaging than on the licence.
- **Per-module pricing.** A headline price covering only the student register, with fees, exams, timetables or transport sold as add-ons, is not one product — it is several invoices.
- **Per-user or per-branch limits.** Bursar, dean, class teachers and reception all need logins. Confirm how many staff accounts are included.
- **Support tiers.** "Standard support" that answers in a week is cheap; support during report-card week is what you actually need.
- **Data exit costs.** If you leave, can you export your records — marks, fee history, registers — in a usable format, and is that export free?

Worked example: three-year cost for a 400-student school

Take a school of 400 students admitting about 80 new learners each year (new Grade 1s, Form 1s and transfers). Compare like with like — total cost over three years:

Model

Year 1

Years 2–3

3-year total

Per-learner subscription at KSh 100/student/year

KSh 40,000

KSh 80,000+ (grows with enrolment)

~KSh 120,000

Flat licence at KSh 30,000/year

KSh 30,000

KSh 60,000

KSh 90,000

Mwalimu Ease (KSh 110 once per new student + KSh 5,000/yr from Year 2)

KSh 8,800 (80 new × 110; maintenance waived)

KSh 8,800 + KSh 10,000

~KSh 27,600

The point is not that one model always wins — a small school that shrinks may prefer a low per-head fee. The point is that you cannot compare quotations until you have run your own numbers through the same table. Add the hidden costs from the list above to each row before deciding.

Questions to ask before you sign anything

- What is the total cost for our exact student and staff numbers, this year and next?
- Which modules are included — marks and report cards, fees and receipts, timetables, parent communication?
- What do setup, training and importing our existing records cost?
- Are SMS or WhatsApp messages included, or billed per message?
- What happens to our data if we stop paying, and can we export it?
- Is there a free trial using our real school data, and does anything get locked after it ends?

Common mistakes schools make when budgeting

- **Comparing sticker prices.** A KSh 20,000/year licence plus SMS bundles, setup and per-module fees can cost more than a KSh 40,000 all-in product.
- **Ignoring enrolment growth.** Per-learner pricing punishes success — model next year's numbers, not this term's.
- **Forgetting the trial question.** A vendor confident in the product lets you use it with real data before paying. Treat "no trial" as a risk, not a policy.
- **Leaving data exit until you need it.** Ask on day one how you get your records out. A register you cannot export is leverage, not a feature.
- **Buying modules you do not need yet.** Fees, marks and student records pay for themselves quickly; buy the rest when the school is ready to use them.

Where Mwalimu Ease fits

We publish our pricing openly because we think schools should not have to email for a quotation: **KSh 110 once per newly admitted student**, first-year hosting and maintenance free, then **KSh 5,000 per year flat** for the whole school from year two — every module included, no per-feature tiers. Returning students are re-admitted free forever. There is a 40-day free trial with your real school data, free setup and migration help, and no SMS-markup surprises built into the licence. If you are comparing quotations, run the three-year table above with our numbers and with any other vendor's — the maths is the honest comparison. For the feature side of the decision, see our school software buyer's checklist.

Frequently asked questions

Is there free school management software in Kenya?

There are free and open-source options, but "free" usually means you pay in other ways: someone must install, host, secure, update and troubleshoot it, and support during report-card week is on you. For most schools the honest comparison is total cost and time, not licence

price alone.

Should a school pay per student or a flat fee?

Per-learner pricing is kinder to very small or shrinking schools; flat pricing is kinder to growing ones. If your enrolment is above a few hundred and rising, model both for three years — flat or one-time models usually win on totals.

Do these systems work with M-Pesa fee payments?

Many do, either by importing M-Pesa statements or through paybill integrations. Ask each vendor specifically — it is a feature that exists in several forms, and the cost of the integration (per-transaction fees, setup) belongs in your comparison table.

What should a small school with under 200 students look for?

A low minimum spend and a genuine trial. Some systems price for large schools and become uneconomical at 150 students; a one-time-per-student model or a cheap flat licence usually fits better at that size.

How do we budget for software in the school fee structure?

Most schools absorb it as an administration cost rather than itemising it to parents. Whatever you choose, model it per admitted learner over the years they will stay — that is the number the board should approve.

Sources: Mwalimu Ease published pricing (mwalimuease.com/pricing). Pricing models described are common market structures; competitor prices change often, so verify each vendor's current quotation directly. Last reviewed 15 November 2026.

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