



Rationale

Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education (DOBCEL) Limited as the proprietor of 56 Catholic schools (DOBCEL Schools) is committed to open, transparent and effective communication with all stakeholders. This Communication Policy has been approved by the DOBCEL Board and ratified by the Member to assist DOBCEL Schools to meet requirements under Schedule 4, clause 12 of the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017. DOBCEL Schools are required to demonstrate the communication of policies and procedures relating care, safety and welfare of students to staff, students, parents, guardians and the school community.

The DOBCEL Board requires DOBCEL Schools to implement a variety of effective communication methods that aims to ensure:

- effective communication between all school community members takes place;
- processes are in place to allow open and honest communication amongst all school community members;
- confidential information is managed in a manner consistent with community expectations, professional standards and legal obligations;
- clear, positive and fair processes and guidelines are provided which allow issues or concerns to be aired and resolved in a timely, effective and respectful manner.

Policy Statement

Effective communication is essential in providing students, teachers, parents and the community with the necessary information to make appropriate decisions. DOBCEL is committed to using communication processes and techniques to build positive learning environments for students, staff and parents in order to inspire and educate all students to succeed in becoming productive and valued citizens.

Electronic communication is the primary method of communication at DOBCEL Schools. This includes the school websites, newsletters, email communications, SIMON Learning Management System, via DOBCEL approved Apps and telephone.

In addition to electronic communication, DOBCEL Schools must also offer alternative methods of communication to reflect the needs of the school community it serves. Members of the school community may request printed copies of policies and other documents from the reception of each School. The availability of interpreters or having key documents in community languages can also assist with communication in DOBCEL Schools.

Members of the community will have regular, formal opportunities for engagement with the school such as Open Days, Parent/Teacher/Student conferences, Parent Information sessions, or more informal face to face meetings with classroom teachers and principals as required and other events in which the school community is encouraged to participate.

DOBCEL Schools must demonstrate a commitment to transparent, professional and respectful engagement and communications with the members of its school community that considers appropriate privacy and confidentiality principles.

Each DOBCEL School must publish a School Communication Policy that is aligned with this overarching Policy. School Communication Policy must outline to the school community, how school policies and procedures can be accessed. The sample table at Appendix 1 demonstrates the ways in which school policies and procedures are communicated to the school community. This table must be contextualised to the school setting and included in the School's Communication Policy.

Communication overview

School Improvement Plan: compiled in collaboration with DOBCEL, school leaders and in consultation with the wider school community. It proposes commitments to key improvement strategies and intended outcomes for the School over the School Improvement Cycle, usually four years. An Annual Action Plan is developed to outline the incremental progress towards the commitments each year.

School Policies: DOBCEL Schools to adopt and implement DOBCEL Board approved policies and procedures at school level that must be accessible to the school community. Using the school's website is an excellent way to ensure that parents, guardians and members of the community can easily locate policies and other documents when required.

They must be made available on the school's website or, upon request, from the school office. Parents and staff must be notified of any changes to school policy and procedures.

Parent Handbook: DOBCEL Schools are expected to publish a Parent Handbook or Prospectus which is provided to new families at the time of enrolment. All DOBCEL Schools should endeavour to publish a current version of the Parent handbook on the school website.

School Newsletter: DOBCEL Schools are expected to publish weekly, fortnightly or monthly whole of school newsletters which are distributed to students and their families. These may be posted on the school's website, and on a DOBCEL approved App such as Parent Access Module (PAM).

Principal's meetings with the School Advisory Council (SAC): provides an opportunity for the Principal to highlight resourcing and operational issues relevant to the general school community.

Parent Information Nights: provides information to the school community. It includes the opportunity for all parents at the commencement of the school year.

Parent-Teacher-Child Conversations/Conferences: formal meetings held at least twice yearly (usually in Term 1 and 3), and at other times on request.

Academic reports (written): DOBCEL Schools must issue twice yearly at the end of Term 2 and Term 4.

Communication with Staff Members All staff members are issued a DOBCEL School email address. DOBCEL Schools communicate to staff on policies and procedures through a variety of means including Staff Portal, Staff Handbook, staff induction, regular staff meetings and professional learning days. Emails are to be checked on a daily basis as it is the main form of communication.

Policies and Procedures

DOBCEL Schools must ensure the following policies and procedures are communicated to its school community. The School website is recommended as a central point for the publication of policies. Schools may also publish some policies in documents such as Handbooks, Prospectus, student planners, newsletters, etc or have available in hard copy for collection:

- School Vision, Mission and Philosophy Statement
- Annual Report to the School Community
- Privacy Policy
- Statement that the school adheres to the Democratic Principles
- Enrolment Policy, including School Fees and Levies
- Code of Conduct for Students and Parents
- Anaphylaxis Policy
- Attendance Policy
- School Child Safety Policy
- Child safety commitment statement (CECV)
- Child protection – responding and reporting obligations
- Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct
- PROTECT Reportable Conduct Policy
- PROTECT: Reporting and Responding Obligations Policy
- PROTECT: Reporting and Responding Obligations Procedures
- Complaints Handling Policy
- Communications Policy
- School Duty of Care Policy
- Emergency and Critical Incident Management Policy
- Asthma Policy
- Arrangements for ill students
- First Aid and Infection Control Policy
- Student Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy
- Digital Technologies Policy
- Pastoral Care and Wellbeing Policy
- Student Behaviour Management Policy
- Supervision of Students Policy
- School Student Supervision Information for Parents
- Information for Volunteers