



DOBCEL Student Empowerment and Participation Policy and Procedure

Reviewed: September 2020

Ratified: January 2021

Next Review: 2022

Background

Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL) Board is committed to:

- zero tolerance of child abuse;
- listening to and empowering children and young people; and
- keeping children and young people safe.

The DOBCEL Board maintains governance oversight of DOBCEL Schools. DOBCEL maintains a management arm, Catholic Education Ballarat to ensure that DOBCEL Schools are safe for children and young people, so DOBCEL Schools are places where children and young people can flourish.

The DOBCEL Board has particular responsibilities for safeguarding of children and young people as required by the [Ministerial Order 870 - Child Safe Standards - Managing the risk of child abuse in schools](#) (MO 870).

This places accountability for managing the risk of child abuse with the DOBCEL Board. Consistent with MO 870, the DOBCEL Board, requires schools governed by DOBCEL to have in place appropriate arrangements to regulate the conduct and decisions of school staff for the benefit of the students.

These arrangements include implementing and complying with the DOBCEL Child Safe Policies and having clear and comprehensive procedures and reporting mechanisms. The objective is for the DOBCEL Board and the wider school community to be confident in the school's capacity to make and implement appropriate decisions, with child safety as an overriding principle

DOBCEL will take account of the diverse needs of children, including the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable, and make reasonable efforts for their inclusion.

Policy Statement

The DOBCEL Board is responsible for the development of strategies to deliver appropriate education about:

- Standards of behaviour for students attending DOBCEL Schools
- Healthy and respectful relationships, including sexuality
- Resilience
- Child abuse awareness and prevention

The DOBCEL Board promotes the [Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools Ministerial Order 870](#) and requires that schools ensure these Standards are promoted in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand and user-friendly to children.

Students in DOBCEL Schools will take an active part in establishing and embedding appropriate standards of behaviour.

Students will be encouraged to make positive changes within the school environment and these strategies will be documented in schools.

Children have unique insights into their own lives, their needs and the world around them. They have a right to be heard and have their concerns and ideas taken seriously, particularly on matters that affect them – including how to keep them safe.

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In DOBCEL Schools, enabling and promoting the empowerment and participation of children includes:

- supporting children and young people to understand their rights, to contribute to child safety planning and to raise concerns
- promoting and encouraging children's participation in decision-making
- valuing and respecting children's opinions
- seeking children's views about what makes them feel safe and unsafe
- establishing an environment of trust and inclusion that enables children to ask questions and speak up if they are worried or feeling unsafe
- promoting children's participation provides valuable information about their experience.
- providing opportunities for children to participate and feel their contributions are valued; they are more likely to speak up when harmed or feeling unsafe

DOBCEL Schools will initiate student focus groups or surveys about various child safety issues in accordance with school review processes to determine the level of understanding and awareness in school communities.

Procedures

These procedures are developed to assist DOBCEL Schools in addressing Child Safe Standard 7: Child Empowerment and Participation.

1. The school's child safety policies and procedures are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children.
2. The curriculum scope and sequence are developed so that it outlines an age-appropriate focus for resilience and healthy and respectful relationships at all year levels.
3. The school curriculum provides developmentally appropriate opportunities for students to learn about issues of safety, self-regulation, protection of self and others from abuse and understanding of their responsibilities and ethical choices.
4. Religious Education units reinforce and allow students to develop their understanding of and respect for the dignity of each person, social justice, reconciliation and respect for diversity.
5. Empowerment and participation of students in learning across the school is to be embedded through a whole-school strategic direction which may include the following:
 - development of strategies that demonstrate different levels of student voice
 - student surveys to assist with informing policies
 - student, staff and parent / care giver committees to review and collaborate on school initiatives
 - student developed policies and procedures on child safety
 - staff/student council
 - student-led conferences
 - curriculum planning that includes pre-testing and post-testing, student input on unit planning and directions
 - student developed child safety policy and student code of conduct
 - student feedback on teaching practice and learning
 - focus group and action research on learning and wellbeing
 - curriculum focus on healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality), resilience, and child abuse awareness and prevention
6. Staff undertake professional learning on student voice, empowerment and participation and ways of creating a culture that encourages students to report issues that limit their own and others' personal safety.
7. Pastoral structures in the school enable the establishment of rules, supportive processes for students to raise issues, the monitoring of student wellbeing and the development and monitoring of personal safety.
8. Schools will systematically review and monitor curriculum and procedures and the impact of these on student outcomes.
9. Age and developmentally appropriate procedures and strategies are in place and communicated broadly so that students know how to report both concerns and any form of abuse.

10. Students contribute to the development of media to communicate aspects of child safety which are displayed throughout the school.
11. PROTECT posters are displayed in staff and public areas.
12. Parents/Carers have access to curriculum information which outlines the school's approach and expectations.
13. Students know what supports are available and have access to support services such as chaplaincy and counselling.
14. Student empowerment and participation is monitored through the risk register.