



School Advisory Council Terms of Reference

Reviewed: November 2020

Ratified: January 2021

Next Review: 2023

Vision

The vision for education in the Ballarat Diocese states: As partners in Catholic education and open to God's presence, we pursue fullness of life for all. We journey towards this vision through:

- proclaiming and witnessing to the Good News of Jesus Christ
- ensuring quality learning that promotes excellence and fosters the authentic human development of all
- living justly in the world, in relationship with each other and in harmony with God's creation
- exploring, deepening and expressing our Catholic identity in diverse ways and enabling each one of us to reflect more fully the image of God

At the heart of this vision is our commitment to the ongoing duty of care that we have for the safety, wellbeing, and inclusion of all children and young people.

Introduction

Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Schools Limited (DOBCEL) Schools operate in a diverse and geographically extensive Diocese which covers the west of Victoria, extending from the Murray River in the North to the Southern Ocean in the South. The Diocese of Ballarat is a place of natural, communal and economic diversity and education occurs in interwoven communities of learners gathered in Jesus' name. It has its foundation in communities of believers who have made their education system a place of welcome to reach out to nurture all God's people. Generations of diocesan clergy, religious congregations and lay people have endeavoured to establish the flourishing educational communities that exist today, with each school an expression of our foundational belief that we are all created in the image and likeness of a loving God.

The Bishop has established the Company, DOBCEL, to assume the ownership and operation of fifty-six (fifty-two Primary and four Secondary) Catholic Schools previously operated in an unincorporated form

and to be responsible for the operation of further schools that will be established by the Company and referred to as DOBCEL Schools. Accordingly, the Board of Directors of DOBCEL is the governing authority of the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Schools as defined under the DOBCEL Constitution. DOBCEL is committed to working with school leadership and school communities to build thriving Catholic education schools. A key dimension of this collaborative work is the establishment and effective operation of advisory councils to support the work of schools.

These advisory councils are not part of the governance structure as such - they sit separately from the delegation and reporting lines to the DOBCEL Board. They are formed and created at a school level to provide informed advice to the Principal of the school.

This document provides the Terms of Reference for DOBCEL School Advisory Councils, hereafter referred to as SAC's.

Governing Principles

The SAC is committed to democratic principles, dialogue and co-responsibility and the fundamental principles of Catholic school governance which can be articulated as follows:

- **The Love of Christ:** We are animated by and based upon the love of Christ for all people
- **Educational Quality:** To provide the best possible quality of education for all students
- **The Role of Parents:** The primary educators of their children with whom we work in partnership
- **Faithfulness to the Mission of the Church:** To bring the Good News and be faithful to Church teaching
- **Inclusivity and Social Justice:** To include and empower the most disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalized
- **Subsidiarity:** Ensuring decisions are made where appropriate, by those closest to and most accountable to those affected
- **Solidarity:** Recognition that we are all gifted in different ways, but called to work together for the one purpose
- **Stewardship of Resources:** We are entrusted to use financial and other resources responsibly, ensuring sustainability for future generations
- **Canon Law:** As part of the Church we are constituted and operate in accordance with Canon Law.

Responsibilities

Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL)

DOBCEL is the responsible entity for the governance and management of all DOBCEL Schools including their legal, regulatory and educational obligations. DOBCEL is the employer of all staff within the DOBCEL Schools and directly delegates to the Principal significant educational, administrative and operational responsibilities and accountabilities.

Parish Priest/Administrator

The Parish Priest is appointed by the Bishop of Ballarat and is responsible for the pastoral care and canonical responsibilities of the parish. He has a key role in providing pastoral and spiritual support and guidance to the school.

Principal

The Principal is appointed by the Executive Director of DOBCEL and is delegated with key responsibilities in the educational, administrative and operational functions of the School in accordance with the DOBCEL Instrument of Delegations. The Principal is supported to fulfil his/her key responsibilities by the SAC that is guided in their work by the DOBCEL Terms of Reference.

School Advisory Council Scope and Purpose

The SAC is the leading advisory group for the Principal, as an active forum for parent and community participation, providing support and advice in strategic planning, school improvement, educational outcomes and stewardship of resources. As outlined in the DOBCEL Governance Charter, SAC members do not have any financial or non-financial decision-making powers.

The School Advisory Council is intended to:

- provide a voice for members of the school community
- actively support, in collaboration with the local parish, the Vision and Catholic Identity of the School
- provide input into and support for strategic planning and directions
- actively support and promote child safety practices including the National Safeguarding Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- provide input and contribute advice in the processes of school improvement and school review
- support the Principal in meeting his/her responsibilities and accountabilities for educational outcomes, effective stewardship of resources, and annual reporting
- actively support the Principal in the encouragement of family engagement
- support the ongoing sustainability of the SAC and its members in its succession and learning

Members of the School Advisory Council acknowledge that:

- All management and operational matters such as delivery of curriculum, human resource matters, parent complaints, programs and policies are the responsibility of the Principal who may seek the advice of SAC members around these matters from time to time.
- The Principal is the spokesperson for the School for initiatives, announcements and issues raised in the local media. No SAC member has authority to speak on behalf of the School or the SAC, unless explicitly delegated and authorised by the Principal.
- Issues of a personal nature or issues involving individuals of the school community will not be raised at SAC meetings.
- Members of the SAC do not have any authority to expend or commit School funds.

Code of Ethics

The SAC will be guided by the members' Code of Ethics as developed and reviewed by the SAC and approved by the Principal.

Prerequisites

In keeping with Child Safe Standards and the school's obligation and commitment to ensure the safety of all children in the care of the school, the DOBCEL Board requires all School Advisory Council members to:

- provide the school with proof of identity – photo identity (eg licence, passport)
- hold and present an up to date *Working With Children Check* (WWCC)
- abide by the school's ChildSafe Policies and Child Safe Code of Conduct
- comply with the school's Volunteer requirements
- provide a '*Fit and Proper Person Statutory Declaration*', witnessed by a duly authorised person.

Membership

SAC membership is a decision of each school SAC, in consultation with the Principal, approved by the Education Consultant. Membership takes into consideration the size of the school and the current school context. The following may serve as a guide:

Ex officio

- Principal
- Priests of the Parish (if available)

Elected or Appointed Members

- It is recommended that no more than six members are elected from and by the School's parent/guardian community
- If deemed appropriate by the SAC, one representative appointed by the Parish, in consultation with the Parish Priest
- Other, as recommended by the SAC, endorsed by the Principal and approved by the Education Consultant

Ideally, the community would elect half the number of parent representatives annually on a "half on half off" basis.

All members will participate in a formal Induction process by the SAC Chair and Principal. (The Education Consultant is also available to assist with this task)

Tenure

The ex-officio members will be ongoing members for the term of their appointment to that role. Other members would normally serve a two-year term with a limit of two consecutive terms. Any mid-term vacancy will be filled by appointment by the Principal in consultation with the SAC Chair and approved by the Education Consultant for the balance of the term.

Election of Members

Prior to the expiry of the term of office for elected members, nominations will be invited through the school's newsletter.

Nominations should be in writing and delivered to the Principal by the designated date.

If the number of nominations equals or is less than the number of vacancies, the nominees will be declared to be elected. Should the number be less than the number of vacancies further nominations may be invited or the Principal and SAC Chair may approach other persons to request their nomination.

If there are more nominations than there are vacancies, a ballot will be held among the parent/guardian community in the manner determined by the Principal in consultation with the SAC Chair.

Vacancies

A vacancy would be declared when a member:

- Reaches the end of a two-year term
- Resigns from office by verbal or written notice
- Fails to attend three consecutive meetings of the SAC without reasonable excuse and/or apology

Should a vacancy arise outside the normal election cycle, the Principal and SAC Chair may approach and appoint a substitute member for the balance of the former member's term of office or leave the position vacant. Any period served in such a casual vacancy will not count as a term of office.

School Advisory Council Chair

When the position of SAC Chair becomes vacant, the members will discern the appointment of a Chair from amongst themselves. Ideally the appointment is made at the AGM or immediately thereafter and the term is for no more than two consecutive years.

The SAC Chair will facilitate all meetings of the SAC. In the absence of the SAC Chair, this responsibility will be delegated to a person nominated by the Chair in consultation with the Principal.

The Chair may also be involved in setting the meeting agenda with the Principal, as deemed appropriate.

A formal meeting format should be followed.

Executive Officer

The role of Executive Officer will be undertaken by the Principal.

The responsibilities for the distribution of agenda, recording and distribution of minutes and other meeting papers may be delegated to a member of the SAC or a member of the school staff. (Please note that the School staff member cannot be a member of the SAC).

Annual General Meeting

An AGM is to be part of the annual meeting cycle, held at a time determined by the SAC.

The key business of the AGM is the presentation of an Annual Report, election of parent representatives and the appointment of the SAC Chair (if required).

School Advisory Council Meetings

The SAC will meet according to a schedule developed at the commencement of each school year, at a time and place convenient to members. The SAC is required to meet at least once per term.

Meetings should not ordinarily exceed a maximum time duration that is agreed by the SAC.

The agenda will be developed by the Principal, in consultation with the Chair and members as needed.

The agenda should be provided to members seven days prior to the meeting. The agenda will include meeting time, date, location and all items for discussion. Where possible, supporting documentation will be forwarded with the agenda. Agendas should always include the following items:

- Acknowledgement of Country
- Prayer
- Declaration of any Conflict of Interest
- Principal's Report (including update on the School Improvement Plan and a Financial report)
- Child Safety and Child Safe Standards
- Risk Management and Compliance

Meetings will be conducted at a time mutually agreeable to members, but consideration should be given for this time to be sufficient to allow appropriate time for discussion.

Whenever possible, recommendations of the SAC are to be reached by consensus. Though full consensus may not always be possible, members are encouraged to reflect, consult, generate ideas, consider the best interests of the School, and trust in the collective wisdom of the group.

Committees of the Advisory Council

The SAC can establish special purpose committees:

- Typical committees would include a Parents and Friends committee, finance committee, a grounds and maintenance committee etc.
- Membership of committees does not need to be confined to members of the SAC.
- A SAC member may be required to serve on each committee.
- All committees are standing committees of the SAC.

Communication

The SAC will keep minutes of meetings for circulation to members prior to the next scheduled meeting.

Minutes will record discussion summaries, resolutions and names of those present. Minutes of meetings are confidential and not for circulation outside SAC membership.

Consideration should be given to a summary of meaningful and non-confidential outcomes from each meeting being circulated within the School community by the Principal in the School Newsletter.

Deliberations at SAC meetings are confidential to the SAC and all recommendations that are made public are to be fully supported by all SAC members

Dispute Resolution

SAC Members must be committed to timely and just resolutions of any disputes or grievance and will observe and respect the following Grievance Procedures:

- Where there is a difficulty, dispute or grievance involving a student or parent/legal guardian with a teacher, the issue will not be raised at a SAC meeting. The parent/legal guardian will be requested to raise the matter directly with the Principal and refer to the DOBCEL Complaints Policy for information about how this will be handled.
- Where there is a difficulty, dispute or grievance between the Principal and Member or Members of the SAC that is not pertaining to SAC business, the issue will not be raised at a SAC meeting. The matter will be dealt with following the procedures as outlined in the DOBCEL Complaints Policy.

Removal

The Principal and SAC Chair may discern the need to terminate the membership of a SAC member where serious concerns over capacity, integrity, communication style or alignment to the values of Catholic education are demonstrated. The advice and approval of the Education Consultant will be sought before a decision is enacted. It is the responsibility of the SAC Chair to enact the decision.

In the event that the SAC Chair membership needs to be terminated, the Principal will refer this to the Education Consultant. Following an investigation by the Education Consultant, the SAC Chair will be advised of the outcome of the investigation by the Education Consultant.