Grievance Policy (Community)

St Joseph's School, Hopetoun operates with the consent of the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat and is operated and governed by the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (**DOBCEL**).

Policy Statement

St Joseph's School (the **School**) is committed to promoting a respectful, safe and supportive learning environment characterised by tolerance and support; and one which also respects the principle of right relationship where people have a healthy respect for the dignity of each other.

Part of this commitment involves ensuring the school community has access to processes that allow for grievances to be managed appropriately, promptly, respectfully and fairly.

Context

This policy provides clear and transparent information about how a parent, student or other member of the school community (other than a staff member) can raise grievances about the School, staff conduct, a student's education and wellbeing, and about how such grievances will be managed and resolved by the School.

The School treats seriously all grievances. Our aim is to ensure that grievances are handled objectively and with sensitivity. In doing so, we will seek to identify both the specific and (where applicable) systemic issues raised by a grievance (thereby enabling future improvements to be identified and implemented).

The procedural steps associated with this policy are intended to be practical, non-adversarial and non-legal. Steps will be implemented flexibly at the School's discretion, depending on the circumstances of each situation.

Scope

This policy applies to all School staff (including employees, contractors, volunteers, labour hire workers and secondees), visitors, parents/guardians, students and other members of the school community.

This policy does not apply to:

- employee grievances, which should be raised in accordance with the DOBCEL Grievance Policy (Staff)
- student grievances, which should be raised in accordance with the St Joseph's Grievance Policy (Student)
- concerns about child abuse and reportable conduct, which will be addressed in accordance with the DOBCEL PROTECT Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy
- legal matters, including requests for compensation, payment and redress.

To the extent that there are any inconsistencies between this policy and DOBCEL or the School's other grievance policies, other than the DOBCEL PROTECT Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy, this policy shall prevail.

Guiding Principles

When raising a grievance with the School, a member of the school community can expect to:

- be treated with respect and courtesy
- have their grievance taken seriously, considered impartially (with consideration of any power imbalances), and dealt with on the merits
- have their grievance dealt with in a confidential and timely manner
- have access to appropriate and easily understandable information regarding the grievance resolution process being followed by the School (including this policy)
- be supported by the School during the grievance handling process, with a focus on maintaining the emotional wellbeing of any students involved
- be kept informed of the progress and outcome of the grievance
- not be victimised, or subjected to reprisal, for raising grievances in good faith.

In return, the School expects that a member of the school community who raises a grievance will:

- treat others (including School staff, students and parents, both former and present) with respect and courtesy
- raise grievances in the appropriate forum, having regard to the below framework, and as soon as possible after the event giving rise to the grievance has occurred
- provide complete and factual information about the grievance
- ask for assistance or further information as needed
- act in good faith to achieve a reasonable outcome
- be understanding and accepting of any outcome reached, being mindful that the School must sometimes manage the interests of a number of students and other individuals when making decisions and may be privy to confidential information not known to the person raising the grievance.

DOBCEL entrusts the Principal of the School to manage the day-to-day operations of the School. A further review by the DOBCEL Office in accordance with DOBCEL's Grievance Policy (Community) should accordingly be a last resort.

The School is for the prompt resolution of concerns, ideally without there being a need for a formal complaint to be made.

Timeframes listed in this policy are a guide, and in reality, can vary due to the nature of the grievance and surrounding circumstances. Where timeframes set out in this policy cannot be met, the School will strive to communicate with the affected parties about the status of the grievance, and the steps taken (or to be taken) to progress a resolution.

Framework

The School's framework for dealing with grievances involves a three-step process, namely:

Stage 1 - A concern is raised with the School.

Stage 2 - A formal complaint is made to the Principal.

Stage 3 - A further review by the DOBCEL Office can be requested (in accordance with DOBCEL's Grievance Policy (Community)).

Further details about these Stages are set out in the Procedures.

Recommendations for initially raising concerns (Stage 1)

In the first instance, a complainant should raise their concerns directly with the School. The School must be aware of a concern and of its substance in order to address it.

The School believes that a concern is often best resolved closest to its source, and when a concern relates to a student, encourages concerns to be raised with the relevant classroom teacher in the first instance.

However, depending on the nature and severity of an issue, and whether the classroom teacher has a conflict of interest, concerns may instead be raised directly with the Principal.

The following considerations are relevant for a person raising a concern prior to, and when, raising a concern:

- clearly identify the issue or problem prior to contacting the School
- decide whether the issue or problem is in the nature of a complaint, concern, enquiry or suggestion. This will help in finding a solution.
- identify the party or parties involved
- consider the practical outcome to be achieved (while being realistic and open to other outcomes and solutions)
- if there is more than one issue or problem, write a list to adequately prepare and prioritise issues in order of importance
- consider whether there are any interim measures you would like considered whilst the School makes enquiries about the issue or problem
- make an appointment to meet with the relevant staff member to discuss the concern – ideally by contacting Reception to arrange a mutually convenient time for a telephone call or meeting. When contacting Reception complainants need to identify themselves, the student concerned, the subject of the concern and the person with whom they wish to speak. It is also necessary to specify the nature of the issue which is to be discussed (e.g. 'homework', etc)
- When conveying concerns, complainants are required to remain courteous and calm. The School is within its rights to terminate a conversation with the person raising the concern until such time that a courteous and calm conversation can continue.

Confidentiality

Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained by the School at all times when dealing with a grievance, with information being provided only to those who have a right or need to know.

Communication

This policy is available to parents, students and the school community via the School's website. This policy (or aspects thereof) will also feature in communications to parents via School, the School newsletters and bulletins as required.

Relevant Considerations

Withdrawal of a Grievance

A grievance can be withdrawn at any stage during the processes outlined in this policy. A grievance can only be withdrawn by the person who made the complaint to the School.

Ideally, all grievances should be retracted in writing. However, a dated notation on the School's systems, stating the grievance has been withdrawn verbally by the appropriate person can be made by a staff member at the School responsible for managing the grievance.

Where considered appropriate, the School will notify affected parties if a grievance is withdrawn.

Regardless of a person's wish to withdraw a grievance, complaints that have disciplinary implications for a member of staff may still be followed up by the School.

Anonymous Grievances

The School is committed to dealing with grievances in accordance with the processes outlined in this policy. The School understands that in some cases, complainants would prefer to remain anonymous and not put a name to their grievances.

The School treats grievances about a student's education, enrolment, safety and wellbeing, with the utmost importance, and will investigate such grievances raised to the fullest extent practicable. Anonymous grievances are discouraged as anonymity can make it difficult for the School to effectively resolve grievances (particularly where the School is being asked to accept an anonymous source's version of events).

Previously Addressed, Stale or Vexatious Grievances

Grievances that have been previously addressed by the School, the DOBCEL Office or externally, or which were not raised with the School within a reasonable period of time (having regard to the nature of the relevant grievance), will not be considered in the absence of highly relevant new information and/or evidence coming to light.

The School does not tolerate vexatious grievances.

External Grievances and Redress

The School acknowledges that grievances relating to the School can also be made to an external body or be the subject of legal action. However, the School encourages its community to raise any grievances, and work to resolve such matters, in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy.

Procedures

Procedures for the processes used to manage complaints at the School are documented separately in the Grievance Procedures (Community).

Legislative Context (if applicable)

Ministerial Order No. 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises Guidelines to the Minimum Standards and Requirements for School Registration
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005

Supporting Documents

Related DOBCEL policies

- School Grievance Procedures (Community)
- School Grievance Policy (Student)
- DOBCEL Grievance Policy (Community)
- School Parents/Guardians/Carers Code of Conduct
- DOBCEL PROTECT Identifying & Responding to Abuse - Reporting Obligations Policy
- DOBCEL PROTECT Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy
- DOBCEL Whistleblower Policy

DOBCEL Principles of Governance

All DOBCEL policies are founded on and reflect the Principles of Governance stated in the Document: DOBCEL Principles of Governance.

Approving authority	DOBCEL Board
Approval Date	November 2025
Review Date	November 2028