DIOCESE OF BALLARAT CATHOLIC EDUCATION LIMITED

Document No. P0350

School Communications Procedure

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

Procedure Statement

St Joseph's School, Hopetoun is dedicated to open, transparent, and effective communication with all stakeholders. Effective communication is essential in providing students, teachers, parents/caregivers, and the community with the necessary information to make appropriate decisions. The school is committed to using communication processes and techniques to build positive learning environments for students, school staff, and parents/caregivers, inspiring and educating all students to succeed in becoming productive and valued citizens.

Purpose

The purpose of the School Communications Procedure is to:

- provide accessible and inclusive communication that responds to the needs of diverse groups within the school community
- promote a culture of honesty, trust, transparency, openness, and respectful communication
- ensure the management of confidential information is in accordance with legal obligations, professional standards, and community expectations
- provide the school and broader community with information regarding events, achievements, and activities at the school promptly

Distributing Information to Parents/Guardians/Carers

Email is the preferred method of distributing information within the school community.

Parents/guardians/carers are to inform the school office on 03 5083 3296 if they prefer to receive information in another form.

The following is a list of instances in which the school will need to contact the student's parent/guardian/carer and the appropriate process for each situation.

	ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBILITY	STEPS
A	Concerns that arise about a student	Teacher	The parent/guardian/carer will be contacted promptly via email or phone to arrange a face-to-face meeting to discuss concerns about the student.
B	A student's behaviour is deemed inappropriate or disrupts the learning process.	Teacher Principal	The Principal is to contact the parent/guardian/carer promptly via email or phone.
C	A student is injured, complains of illness, or must go home for any reason.	Teacher School	Staff to contact the parent/guardian/carer promptly via email or phone.

Communicating with School Staff

Parents/guardians/carers may sometimes have concerns about a student's academic progress, social relationships, or general classroom matters. In the first instance, these concerns should be raised directly with the student's class teacher.

Contact with the class teacher is made by using one of the following approaches:

- in writing via email asking to organise a suitable time
- either by phone or the school office and arrange for the teacher to contact the parent or caregiver for a suitable time

If a concern remains unresolved between the teacher and parent/guardian/carer, an appointment is to be made with St Joseph's School to determine how to discuss the issue further.

Right to Disconnect

The Fair Work Act includes a provision where employees can disconnect from communication tools and not respond to their employer after or outside work hours. Specifically, employees have two rights:

- to refuse to monitor, read, or respond to contact from an employer outside of the employee's working hours unless the refusal is unreasonable
- to refuse to monitor, read, or respond to contact from a third party if the contact relates to their work and is outside the employee's working hours unless the refusal is unreasonable

Laws now include a 'right to disconnect' term and a free-standing right to disconnect in modern awards.

The Fair Work Commission has the authority to issue stop orders for continuous unwarranted contact.

The legislation outlines factors to consider when determining whether contact outside working hours is reasonable. These include:

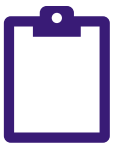
- the nature and urgency of the reason for contact
- the method of contact (e.g. a phone call would likely be considered more disruptive than an email)
- whether the employee is compensated for working outside of their ordinary hours
- the level of the employee's responsibility within the organisation
- the employee's individual circumstances.

For more information, refer to the VCEA – Right to Disconnect: Fair Work Act Amendments Information Sheet.

School Communication Methods with Parents/Guardians/Carers

	COMMUNICATION TOOL	DESCRIPTION OF USE
1	**Telephone**	• For urgent matters, student absences, enrolments, changes to contact details, and to arrange meeting times with school staff contact the school office by telephone: 03 5083 3296 • Office hours are Monday to Friday, 8:30am-4:00pm • Staff are not to be contacted on their personal mobile phones • Students must sign mobile phones into the office before school starts and collect them immediately after school
2	**Email**	• All families are requested to provide their email details on their enrolment application; changes to email address must be communicated directly to the school office • Teachers will endeavour to respond to parent/caregiver emails within three (3) school days during the school week • The school email address is: principal@sjhopetoun.catholic.edu.au • Administration and Leadership will access their emails at various times throughout the day and will endeavour to respond to parents/ guardians/carers within one school day during the school week

	COMMUNICATION TOOL	DESCRIPTION OF USE
		• For urgent matters the school should be contacted by telephone rather than by email • Messages concerning arrangements for going home should not be sent by email as staff may not always be able to access emails during the school day • Invoices related to school fees, excursions, and/or activities are distributed via print or email **Reports** Semester Reports are distributed twice per year at the end of Terms 2 & 4
3	 **Text Messaging**	• The school may use an automated text message service to notify parents/guardians/carers of unexplained student absences; any parent or caregiver who has not contacted the school regarding their child's absence via telephone or other means will be sent a message or phoned regarding absences by 10am • Parents/guardians/caregivers can respond to issued automated text message service to explain their child's absence • The school may use the text message service to contact parents/guardians/carers regarding other urgent matters, such as school closures due to extreme weather events • The school may use text messages to inform parents/guardians/carers about compulsory school drills such as lockdown and fire drills • Text messages are generally sent to one parent/guardian/carer per student unless other arrangements are in place
4	 **Website** **St Joseph's School**	http://www.sjhopetoun.catholic.edu.au/ The school website contains: • Access to information about the school, including policies, procedures, and school reporting documentation • Relevant contact information and links to other resources and communication tools • A school calendar
5	 **School Apps**	• Our school uses the following Apps for communication with parents/guardians/carers; please contact the school office if you require further information or assistance with downloading, Sign Up, and/or Login details: • PAM (Parent Access Module) • SIMON Everywhere • Class Dojo

	COMMUNICATION TOOL	DESCRIPTION OF USE
6	 **Face to Face Communication**	**Parent Teacher Interviews** • Parent and teacher interviews generally occur in Terms 1 and 3 to discuss students' progress, concerns, goals, and other issues • Bookings for these interviews will be made available to parents/guardians/carers **Parent Information Nights** • Parent information nights may be provided at various times during the year for the school community, including information evenings to outline the year ahead • For sensitive issues and concerns, communication should be by face-to-face meetings **Parent-Teacher-Student Communication** • Parent-Teacher-Student Conversations are formal meetings held at least twice a year (as above) and at other times when requested or required • Parents/guardians/carers can make appointments with teachers and school leaders via email or through the office; communication information will be provided by teachers at the beginning of the year through class and/or school newsletters • Meetings to discuss student needs will be conducted outside school hours • Communication between parents/guardians/carers, and staff is always welcomed and encouraged
7	 **Newsletter**	• Parents/guardians/carers may receive class or year-level newsletters and information • Regular school newsletters throughout each school term will update families on what students are learning, school news, and events from the term
8	 **School Opinion Survey**	• St Joseph's School conduct School Opinion Surveys to obtain the views of parents and caregivers, students, and school staff on what they do well and how they can improve • Opinions on the school, student learning, and student well-being are sought from parents/guardians/carers in all families and a sample of students from the school • School staff and Principals are asked for their opinions on the school as a workplace; teaching staff are also asked additional questions about their confidence in teaching and improving student outcomes • The school shares the key results of the survey with the school community

Social Media

Should the school create a profile on any social media services, when anyone within the school community is contributing to those social media platforms, it is important that such contributions are positive and respectful. Members of the school community must not post any material which:

- vilifies individuals on the basis of their religion, gender, race, or sexual preference
- is racist, hateful, defamatory, libellous, derogatory, threatening, harassing abusive, discriminatory, or humiliating
- contains material (written, audio, video, and other electronic forms) that infringes Intellectual property rights such as copyright
- contains personal information about another individual without their consent (including identifying information, email addresses, phone numbers, or private addresses)
- falsely represents another individual, organisation, government, or entity
- implies endorsement of a product, business, company, or organisation
- promotes a product, business, company, or organisation, the only exception being their school
- interferes with or prejudices the course of or otherwise deals with civil or criminal proceedings that are presently before any court, tribunal, commission, or similar body or any investigation by the police, Crime and Corruption Commission, or other agency

Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
School staff	School staff will: • respond to parent/guardian/carer emails within three (3) school days during the school week • use language that is clear and accessible to parents/guardians/carers and the community • activate an autoreply message detailing relevant information concerning staff on leave • ensure that school email account users respect confidentiality, privacy, legal and professional privilege, and the rights of others and that the content and dissemination of email do not jeopardise those protections
Parents/guardians/carers	Parents/guardians/carers will: • provide the school with the most current contact information including telephone numbers and email addresses • contact the school to advise of short-term student absences due to illness • refer all school related matters to the school; if parents/guardians/carers have any concerns, they must contact the school directly

Approved By	Principal
Approval Date	February 2025