



Letter to parents from DOBCEL: Endorsement and Opt-Out

Ballarat Diocese Structured Literacy Project La Trobe University Human Ethics Committee

HEC Approval No. 23008

12th Feb 2026

Dear Parents and Guardians

The Ballarat Diocese is partnering with the School of Education at La Trobe University to roll out and evaluate a new approach to initial literacy instruction in a sample of Ballarat Diocese schools, including the school attended by your child/children.

The aims of the research are:

- To determine whether this approach results in measurable gains in students' reading, writing, and spelling skills, as against our routine practices in recent years.
- To document student wellbeing (behaviour and emotional adjustment) in response to the new teaching approach.
- To examine changes in teacher knowledge and confidence in the teaching of literacy, and to understand teacher views about this new way of teaching.

The purpose of this letter is to let you know that information about all students' classroom progress on reading, writing, and spelling will be collected and analysed as part of this project. This information will be collected on children in schools that are trialling the new approach and also on schools that for the time being, are continuing with current practices. De-identified Year 3 and Year 5 NAPLAN Literacy data will be used as part of the evaluation and made available to the La Trobe University research collaborators. We will create a unique code for each child, made up of letters and numbers, so that when information is transferred to La Trobe University, it does not contain names of schools, teachers, or individual students. Your student's de-identified learning data will be used in the process of assessing the effectiveness of the new approach. When reports are published out of this work, there will be no names of participating schools, teachers, or students included.

All student data used will be de-identified, transferred, stored, and ultimately destroyed in ways that comply with privacy legislation and the requirements of the La Trobe University Human Ethics Committee.

If you do not wish for your child/children's data to be used in the study, you may opt out by completing the form below and returning it to the classroom teacher. Your child/children's data will not then be included in any analysis. Even if you do initially agree, you may choose to withdraw your child/children's data at any point later on. If you are happy for your child / children's de-identified data to be used as part of the research, you do not need to do anything in response to this letter. By not responding you are endorsing the use of de-identified data for the research.

Your decision (either way) to allow your child/children's de-identified data to be used as part of the research will not in any way affect your relationship with your child /children's school, the Ballarat Diocese, or La Trobe University. If you initially decide to opt out, but change your mind later, that can be accommodated up until the time that data analysis commences.

If you have any questions or would like more information about the project or data being collected, please call Emma Rutherford, Catholic Education Ballarat on 0419 479 264 or myself. This project is an important part of the efforts to improve the educational outcomes of our young people, and your assistance is greatly appreciated. Questions about the research may also be directed to Distinguished Professor Pamela Snow (0458 377 253) or Professor Tanya Serry (0418 384 085).

Regards,

Ben Shields
Principal
St Patrick's School, Ballarat



Ballarat Diocese letterhead AND La Trobe University letterhead

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OPT-OUT FORM

(Important: only complete this form if you do NOT agree to your child / children’s data being used in the research study).

If you wish to opt out of this research, please detach the form below and return to your child / children’s classroom teacher.

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Parent / Guardian **Opt-out**

Name of child/children

Family name: Given name:
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School: Year Level:
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Family name: Given name:
.....

School: Year Level:
.....

Family name: Given name:
.....

School: Year Level:
.....

Parent / Guardian name

Family name: Given name:
.....

Parent / guardian signature:
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