



Parent Disputes

POLICY

Rationale

Schools are often confronted with issues that arise from parental separation. Such issues are often emotionally charged. Cardinia Primary School will manage any issues that arise in accordance with the law and the policies of the Department of Education and Training.

Aim

- To explain to the school community how our school will approach disputes that may arise between parents in relation to decisions about a student's education.

Scope

While acknowledging that a range of people may be involved in providing care for students at our school, this policy only relates to disputes between a student's parents or persons with parental responsibility under a court order.

Implementation

Informal Carers

- Cardinia Primary School understands that there may be families in our school community where students are being cared for by a relative or other adult, rather than their parents.
- In these circumstances, in order to allow these carers to work with Cardinia Primary School and make decisions about the student's education, we may ask carers to complete an Informal Carer Statutory Declaration. This is a written statement that sets out the care arrangements for the child.
- Generally, an informal carer who has provided the school with a completed Informal Carer Statutory Declaration may make school-based decisions for the student and may access school information ordinarily provided to a parent.

Decision making and parental responsibility

- Parental responsibility is defined as all of the duties, powers, responsibilities and authority, which, by law, parents have in relation to their children. Each parent of a child under 18 years of age has parental responsibility for his or her child unless this responsibility is varied by a court order or parenting plan.
- When a decision relates to a major long-term issue for a student, Cardinia Primary School will generally seek to approach both parents, or those who have parental responsibility, in relation to that decision (where those parents are known to and are in contact with the school).
- For day-to-day decisions, Cardinia Primary School will generally approach the person with whom the student is living with or residing with on that day.
- Parents can find more guidance on how the school will manage decision making for students in the Department's policy on *Decision Making Responsibilities for Students*.

Family Law Act Orders and Care Arrangements

- Parents are responsible for providing Cardinia Primary School with up-to-date information and

documentation relating to:

- * Family Law Act Orders;
 - * Parenting Plans;
 - * Informal arrangements that are in place in respect of students at our school.
- It is not the responsibility of school staff to monitor or to enforce Family Law Act Orders (or other parenting or care arrangements) for students.

Intervention Orders

- Cardinia Primary School understands that some families may have Family Violence Intervention Orders in place.
- Parents are responsible for providing the school with up-to-date information and documentation relating to Intervention Orders and should contact the Principal to discuss how staff can best support students in these circumstances.
- Should an Intervention Order be changed or varied, it is a parent's responsibility to inform the Principal and provide any updated documentation.
- Breaches of Intervention Orders should be reported to Victoria Police.

Enrolment and Transfer

- If parents who have equal shared parental responsibility disagree on the decision to enrol a student, Cardinia Primary School may:
 - * defer admission and request that parents resolve their dispute and reach an agreement, or
 - * if failure to enrol the child or young person is likely to have an adverse effect on their education and wellbeing, Cardinia Primary School may conditionally enrol the student and encourage the parents to resolve their dispute and reach agreement.

Collection

- Cardinia Primary School understands that Family Law Act Orders or Parenting Plans will often include arrangements about which parent is to spend time with the children, and when.
- Generally, providing that both parents have shared parental responsibility, parents can collect their children from school. Whilst Cardinia Primary School encourages parents to abide by Family Law Act Orders, school staff are not responsible for enforcing them.
- If a dispute between parents over the collection of a student happens at Cardinia Primary School, generally, we will:
 - * encourage the parents to resolve their dispute away from school;
 - * encourage parents to ensure the child's attendance at school is not compromised as a result of the dispute over collection;
 - * where appropriate, move the student to a safe place away from the dispute;
 - * ask the disputing parties to leave the school grounds if the dispute is causing disruption or concern to the child or any other members of the school community;
 - * if the dispute cannot be resolved, Cardinia Primary School may contact Victoria Police and/or Child Protection.

Requests for Information

- Parents are generally entitled to information ordinarily provided to parents, including school reports and newsletters.

- Parents seeking information that is not ordinarily provided to parents are encouraged to apply for access through the Freedom of Information process, or, if the information is sought for use in court proceedings, by issuing a subpoena.
- Freedom of Information request should be directed the Department of Education and Training.

Managing Disputes

- Whenever faced with a dispute between persons who are responsible for decision-making in relation to a child, staff at Cardinia Primary School will seek to:
 - * avoid becoming involved;
 - * avoid attempting to determine the dispute;
 - * act neutrally and not adopt sides;
 - * act in the best interests of the student involved;
 - * act in the best interests of the school community;
- Cardinia Primary School encourages parents and carers to seek the assistance of the Family Relationship Centre or obtain independent legal advice if they are unable to reach an agreement about important decisions.

References

- School Policy and Advisory Guide
 - Decision Making Responsibilities for Students
 - Information (Requests for Information about Students)
 - Intervention Orders

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed every three (3) years or as deemed necessary.

Ratified

As this is an operational policy it is not required to be ratified by School Council.