

How you as parents can help the school

- **Treat** all members of the school community with dignity and respect.
- **Keep** the school informed of important changes that are affecting your child and your family that may impact upon your child at school and upon the school's interactions with your family members.
- **Provide** the school with up-to-date parenting agreements and Court orders including any AVOs.
- **Work** collaboratively with the school to resolve any issues that arise.
- **Understand** that the school must communicate and consult with both parents and provide each with opportunities to attend school events unless a court order restricts the rights of a particular parent to interact with the school.
- **Providing** the school with an agreed position about how step-parents, grandparents or other family members will interact with the school can be helpful.
- **Ring** the school and make an appointment with the principal if you have a concern about the way the school is interacting with family members. These matters are best dealt with in a confidential way with the principal.
- **Keep** family disagreements away from the school site. School is not the place for 'scoring points' against another parent and this includes comments written in student diaries.
- **Understand** that except in rare, clearly defined situations, the school must enrol your child in the name shown on their birth certificate.

Useful Contacts

Family Referral Service: 1800 066 757

Catholic Care: www.catholiccare.org/families

Relationships Australia:
www.relationships.org.au
(counselling and support)

Family Relationships Online:
www.familyrelationships.gov.au

Family Court of Australia:
www.familycourt.gov.au

Unifam Counselling & Mediation:
www.unifamcounselling.org

Vinnies: www.vinnies.org.au
(financial aid and assistance)
Legal Aid: www.legalaid.nsw.com

Centrelink: www.humanservices.gov.au
(general information on separated parents)

Inter-relate: www.interrelate.org.au
02 4363 8050

Wyong, Erina, Woy Woy
(family counselling, mediation & dispute resolution)

Manly Warringah Women's Resource Centre:
9971 4499
(family Welfare, Domestic Violence)

Manly Adolescent & Family Counselling
Service: 9976 1486
www.manly.gov.au

Schools and family breakdowns

Guide for Parents



Supporting our students and our families

Each Catholic school strives to support every student and every family within its school community. The reality is that some family relationships can be complex and the school endeavours to be sensitive to these.

As a Catholic community our starting point is the understanding that each of us is made in God's image and our deep respect for the innate dignity and uniqueness of each and every person. A Catholic school community immersed in the Gospel of Jesus and filled with his Spirit is committed to the values of compassion, tolerance, forgiveness and reconciliation.

We affirm the rights of all members of the school community to *feel safe* and *be safe* at school.

The ways in which people interact with each other in the daily life of the school significantly affects each person's sense of well-being, identity and self-worth and contributes to the culture of the community. Everyone in the school community has a responsibility to foster quality interpersonal relationships amongst teachers, students, parents, support staff, priests and parish communities.

The place of parents as prime educators of their children is respected and affirmed.

The school's prime concern is always to *act in the best interests of your child*. Feeling safe and supported at school is essential for student wellbeing and a pre-requisite for effective learning. Most particularly in situations of family breakdown, school needs to be a 'safe' place for its students.

What the school can do for you as parents who do not live together

- **Provide** both of you with school reports, newsletters, invitations to parent/teacher interviews, concerts, assemblies, etc. unless Court orders require otherwise.
- **Act** consistently with court orders.
- **Respond** to requests for information about your child's academic performance, attendance, or social interactions at school, unless court orders require otherwise.
- **Respect** your privacy and comply with the requirements of the Privacy Act.
- **Offer** counselling for students or referrals to external counselling services.
- **Offer** fee discounts for families in a position of genuine financial hardship.
- **Provide** opportunities for both of you to volunteer at school if, but only if, your child is comfortable with this.

The school cannot:

- **Become** involved in the interpretation or enforcement of court orders. If you are not clear about the meaning of an order or as parents interpret it differently you need to take legal advice. Similarly, if you disagree about an important decision about your child's education you need to seek help from the court. It is not appropriate for the school to become involved and risk interfering with the processes of the court.
- **Favour** one parent over the other. In the absence of court orders requiring a different approach, the school will endeavour to treat both parents equally and to consult with each of you about any significant issues relating to your child irrespective of who is paying school fees.
- **Provide** information about one parent to the other parent in the absence of their consent or a subpoena from a court.
- **Respond** to daily requests about students' arrival, departure, lunch box contents, transport arrangements, etc. The school community contains large numbers of families, many of whom will need to interact with the office, the principal or teachers on any given day, so it may not always be practicable to respond to requests of this nature.
- **Arrange** or allow a parent to visit a student on the school premises during the school day.
- **Become** actively involved in the hand over process for students who spend time living with each parent during term time. Where possible, handovers should take place away from the school.