

## How you as parents can help the school

- **Treat** all members of the school community with dignity and respect including on social media.
- **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 to talk with the principal or his or her nominee if you have a concern about any family related issue including how the school is interacting with you or another member of your family.
- **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  
CatholicCare: [www.catholiccare.org/families](http://www.catholiccare.org/families)

Relationships Australia: 1300 364 277  
[www.relationships.org.au](http://www.relationships.org.au)

Family Relationships Online/Advice line: 1800 050 321 [www.familyrelationships.gov.au](http://www.familyrelationships.gov.au)

Family Court of Australia:  
[www.familycourt.gov.au](http://www.familycourt.gov.au)

Unifam Counselling & Mediation:  
[www.unifamcounselling.org](http://www.unifamcounselling.org)

Vinnies: [www.vinnies.org.au](http://www.vinnies.org.au)  
(financial aid and assistance)

Legal Aid Help Line: 1800 101 810  
[www.legalaid.nsw.com](http://www.legalaid.nsw.com)

LawAccess: 1300 888 529  
[www.lawaccess.nsw.gov.au](http://www.lawaccess.nsw.gov.au)  
(legal guidance)

Centrelink: [www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au)

Child Support (Department of Human Services): [www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/dhs/child-support](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/dhs/child-support)

Domestic Violence Line: 1800 656 463

\* Centacare and Vinnies have offices in many towns in the New England and Northwest NSW and can provide advice on other services that may be able to provide suitable support.

# Schools and Family Breakdowns

## A GUIDE FOR PARENTS



May 2016

## 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.

## 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.
- **Respond** to requests for information about your child's academic performance, attendance, or social interactions at school.
- **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.
- **Act** consistently with court orders.
- **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 if parents interpret it differently you may need to take legal advice. Similarly, if you disagree about an important decision about your child's education you may need to seek help through a family mediation service or from the court. It is not appropriate for the school to become involved.
- **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. The school is required to provide information to the court if it receives a subpoena.
- **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. Parents should work together to resolve these issues where they can.