

PARENT DISPUTES POLICY



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help understanding the information in this policy, please contact [insert school contact details].

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to explain to the Berwick Chase Primary School community how our school will approach disputes that may arise between parents in relation to decisions about a student's education.

SCOPE

Berwick Chase Primary School acknowledges and welcomes all family structures and parenting arrangements, including single parents, step-parents, same-sex parents, co-parents and informal carers. We also recognise that parents and carers play an invaluable role in a child's learning and well-being by being actively involved in school life.

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.

Informal Carers

Berwick Chase Primary School understands that there may be families in our school community where students are cared for by a relative or other adult, rather than their parents.

In these circumstances, in order to allow these carers to work with Berwick Chase Primary School and make decisions about the student's education, we may ask carers to complete an Informal Carer Statutory Declaration Form. 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 access school information ordinarily provided by a parent.



POLICY

Decision-making parental responsibility

Parental responsibility is all of the duties, powers, and obligations and au a court order or parenting plan varies this responsibility. Each parent of a child under 18 has parental responsibility for his or her child unless a court order or parenting plan goes this responsibility.

When a decision relates to a significant long-term issue for a student, Berwick Chase 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, Berwick Chase Primary School will generally approach the person with whom the student is living or residing 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'](#).

Family Law Act Orders and Care Arrangements

Parents are responsible for providing Berwick Chase Primary School with up-to-date information and documentation relating to the following:

- Family Law Act Orders
- parenting plans
- informal arrangements that are in place in respect of students at our school

The school staff's responsibility is not to monitor or enforce Family Law Act Orders (or other parenting or care arrangements) for students.

Intervention Orders

Berwick Chase Primary School understands that some families may have Family Violence Intervention Orders in place.

Parents are responsible for providing Berwick Chase Primary School with up-to-date information and documentation relating to Intervention Orders and should contact [insert name, role, contact number] to discuss how staff can best support students in these circumstances. Should your Intervention Order be changed or varied, it is essential that you inform [same contact] and provide any updated documentation.

Department policy states that 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, Berwick Chase 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, Berwick Chase Primary School may conditionally enrol the student and encourage the parents to resolve their dispute and reach an agreement.

Collection

Berwick Chase 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, parents can collect their children from school because both parents have shared parental responsibility. Whilst Berwick Chase 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 Berwick Chase 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 the 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, Berwick Chase Primary School may contact Victoria Police and Child Protection.

Visits during school hours

We understand that there may occasionally be a reason why a parent or carer may want to speak to or see their child at school during school hours.

If a particular pressing or unavoidable issue cannot wait until the end of the school day, we ask that parents or carers call the school office to make the request to speak to or see their child during school hours.

We also ask that parents avoid arranging to visit their children at school wherever possible, as this can cause inappropriate disruptions to the school day.

All parents or carers who visit our school during school hours, other than during usual school pick-up and drop-off times, must sign in as a visitor at the school office.



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 requests should be directed to:

Manager – Freedom of Information Unit
Department of Education and Training
2 Treasury Place
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002
03 9637 3134
foi@edumail.vic.gov.au

Managing Disputes

Whenever faced with a dispute between persons who are responsible for decision-making about a child, staff at Berwick Chase 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

Berwick Chase Primary School encourages parents and carers to seek the assistance of the Family Relationship Centre or obtain independent legal advice if they cannot agree about important decisions.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- School Policy Advisory Guide:
 - [Decision-Making Responsibilities for Students](#)
 - [Requests for Information About Students](#)
 - [Intervention Orders](#)



COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- the Department's Policy Advisory Library:
 - [Decision-Making Responsibilities for Students](#)
 - [Requests for Information About Students](#)
 - [Intervention Orders](#)

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	Feb 2023
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	Feb 2026