

Avondale Primary School

PARENT DISPUTES POLICY



Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Avondale Primary School is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families.

We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

Avondale Primary school's approach to creating and maintaining a child safe school environment is guided by our school philosophy and values. At Avondale Primary School our vision is 'to create a community that strives for excellence through high quality learning, engagement and wellbeing for all.'

We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our school environments.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our school has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the school office on 9318 1755.

PURPOSE

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

SCOPE

Avondale 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 wellbeing 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

Avondale 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.

Avondale Primary School

PARENT DISPUTES POLICY



In these circumstances, in order to allow these carers to work with Avondale 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 may access school information ordinarily provided to a parent.

POLICY

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, Avondale 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, Avondale 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 Avondale 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 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

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

Parents are responsible for providing Avondale Primary School with up to date information and documentation relating to Intervention Orders and should contact the Principal or Assistant Principal on 93181755 to discuss how staff can best support students in these circumstances. Should your Intervention Order be changed or varied, it is important that you inform the Principal or Assistant Principal and provide any updated documentation.

Department policy states that breaches of Intervention Orders should be reported to Victoria Police.

Avondale Primary School

PARENT DISPUTES POLICY



Enrolment and transfer

If parents who have equal shared parental responsibility disagree on the decision to enrol a student, Avondale 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, Avondale Primary School may conditionally enrol the student and encourage the parents to resolve their dispute and reach agreement.

Collection

Avondale 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 Avondale 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 Avondale 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, Avondale Primary School may contact Victoria Police and/or 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 there is a particular pressing or unavoidable issue that 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, are required to 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.

Avondale Primary School

PARENT DISPUTES POLICY



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@education.vic.gov.au

Managing disputes

Whenever faced with a dispute between persons who are responsible for decision-making in relation to a child, staff at Avondale 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

Avondale 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.

COMMUNICATION

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

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at annual staff briefings/meetings
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- 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	July 2023
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	July 2024