



Timaru Christian School Procedures

HS14 - Separated Parents, Custody and Guardianship

Parents are responsible for informing the school of their marital situation and custody and access arrangements. Any dispute over the rights of separated parents regarding their child's schooling, or access rights and communication, should be resolved by the parents, or through the Courts. It is not the principal's job to adjudicate.

The Rights of the Guardian and the School

Both parents as guardians are entitled to:

- receive a copy of the child's reports
- discuss educational progress with the principal and teacher
- contribute to major educational decisions, for example, which school the child attends, special class admission, religious instruction, etc.
- participate in school functions
- see normal school records.

The guardians themselves must take the initiative in exercising these rights.

Access Rights and the School

A non-custodial parent wishing to see their child during school hours should go to the principal first. The principal only grants access during class hours if the care and custody order specifies that time for access. With older students, the wishes of that child are important and should be respected.

If the principal is suspicious about a person wanting to contact a child at school (for instance, doubt over identity, good faith, or legal rights) they should:

- contact the custodial parent and ascertain the person's right of access.
- ask to see the court order, or to contact the person's solicitor, if the person claims access under a court order. If the court order says "reasonable access", then the principal may refuse access until after school hours so that the running of the school is not unnecessarily disrupted, nor the child's schooling inhibited.
- deny unrestricted access to the child, especially if it is suspected the person may remove the child from school.
- supervise the meeting with the child in the principal's office.
- use professional judgement, having the welfare of the child as the paramount consideration.

The school considers it inappropriate for a non-custodial parent to send personal mail to a child at school. A pattern of mail should be queried by a teacher.



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Surnames

Both guardians, not the custodial parent alone, determine the surname of a child. Where conflict arises, the school should note both names in all official records.

Parents Access to Students During School Hours

The school wants to ensure as little disruption as possible to the school/class programme, and to the child's learning. Timaru Christian School expects parents to use common sense and limit disruption to teaching and learning by only making contact or visits during breaks and lunchtime if possible.

Non-custodial parents wishing to see their child during school hours should first approach the school office.