

Access Arrangements for Separated Parents/Guardians Policy

The Hazard – Access Arrangements

The separation of parents can be extremely traumatic, especially for the children involved. Whilst many separations are amicable, others can result in serious disputes between parents/guardians including the creation of court sanctioned custody arrangements.

Unless the college is aware that parents/guardians have separated and the status of the separation (including whether there are court orders in place) the safety, wellbeing and development of the child and other students and/or staff may be at risk. In addition the separation, if not properly managed by the college may affect the best educational interests of the child.

Thomas Carr College's Policy

Thomas Carr College is committed to providing a safe environment for all our students, staff and visitors.

It is our policy that:

- A copy of the court order and relevant information that restricts access to children from certain individuals should be provided to the college upon student enrolment or at the time the order is made;
- Parents/guardians keep the college informed in the event of separation and the status of any court proceedings affecting access arrangements;
- A copy of any court orders must be maintained on the relevant student's files and the terms of the court orders affecting access arrangements must be advised to the EA to the Principal, relevant Head of School, relevant Year Level Coordinators, Counsellors and Front Administration
- Any court order with regard to access/custody arrangements will be upheld by the college;
- Under no circumstances will the college release addresses or contact details of a child or parent, to another parent without a court order, unless there is consent;
- Staff will not become involved in resolving disputes concerning student family matters; and
- If there is reason to believe the child's safety may be at risk, the college will withhold the student until further instructions are received from the appropriate parties.

Parental Access to Student Information

Parental access to student information will be dependent upon whether or not there is any court order in place affecting such access.

Generally the college will provide student information concerning a child's education to parents/guardians by giving parents/guardians a PAM account.

Parents/guardians may request access to student information and documents which the college will make available, unless the college is aware that there are court orders that deny access to the relevant information.

The college will release student information to external organisations such as the police and government agencies, if required to do so by law.

Pick Up of Students at College

Parental access to pick up students either after or during college hours will be dependent upon whether or not there is a court order in place affecting such access.

Generally either parent/guardian has the capacity to pick up their child at the end of the day. Similarly, either parent/guardian may pick up their child during college hours, upon providing sufficient reasons to the college.

In cases where a court order is in place and someone other than the usual person arrives to pick up a child during college hours or to pick up a child at the end of the day, caution should be exercised. In these circumstances, reference to the court order on the student's file should be made to ascertain the nature of the relationship between the student and the person who is seeking to pick up the child. The parent named on the student's file as having responsibility for the long term care of the child or responsibility for educational matters, should be contacted to determine whether the request to pick up the student should be permitted.

If the parent does not give permission, the child is hesitant to go with the person, or the supervising teacher has reason to believe that the child's safety may be at risk, the college will not grant permission to remove the child.

If the person refuses to leave the college or becomes agitated or aggressive, they should be told that failure to leave the premises will lead to the police being called. If the person continues to remain on college premises despite the warning, the police should be contacted. Refer to our Violent Intruder on Grounds Policy.

Note the college is not the appropriate place for a separated parent who has limited contact with their child under a court order to have contact with their child.

Parental Involvement in College Activities

Parental involvement in a child's College activities will be dependent upon whether or not there is a court order in place affecting such involvement.

Generally both parents may attend and become involved in College activities in the normal course. This may include canteen duties and assistance on excursions or sporting events.

Involvement in College activities will be denied if contact is considered inappropriate or there are genuine concerns for the safety and wellbeing of the student, other students and/or staff. Such cases may include where one parent/guardian has an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO) against another parent or a child, or where the one parent has been denied the long term care of the child or responsibility for educational matters by court order.

Where a conflict arises, the Principal or other appropriate senior staff member should be contacted and it shall be their responsibility to determine how to handle the conflict situation.

Note: a mere objection to participation in the activity is not a sufficient reason to deny participation without a court order, unless there are genuine concerns held for the safety, wellbeing or the best educational interests of the child and/or other students.

Staff Responsibility

All staff are responsible to:

- Familiarise themselves with any court orders that may exist with respect to students in their care;
- Be alert to signs that a child may be suffering stress as a result of a separation and report the same to the Student Wellbeing Team Leader, or the student's Head of School and/or Year Level Coordinators
- Refuse permission for a parent to pick up a student under their care where there is any perceived danger to the safety of the child;
- Notify the Principal in the event a conflict situation arises; and
- Follow the guidelines as set out in this policy.

Implementation

This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- Staff training;
- Effective communication with parents/guardians;
- Effective record keeping procedures;
- Briefing staff as to students under their care where access is subject to a court order;
- Appropriate management of parents seeking access to students at college; and
- Initiation of corrective actions where necessary.

Discipline for Breach of Policy

Where a staff member breaches this policy Thomas Carr College may take disciplinary action.

Related Policies

Child Protection Program

Violent intruder on Grounds Policy

Policy status: New

Key Stakeholders: College staff, students and parents

Endorsement Body: College Executive

Ratification Body: College Board Policy

Author: Core Wellbeing Team

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Date of Scheduled Review: 2020

The content of this policy can be changed at the College Board's discretion at any time without notification.