

# Hauraki Primary School Policy Document

## Role of the Parent/Guardian in school Life

### **Rationale:**

The safety, wellbeing, and security of all students is the first and paramount consideration of Hauraki school.

The school recognises that students may live in a situation where one parent is not living at the permanent address of the student. Parents are therefore responsible for informing the school of the day-to-day care, pick-up, and contact arrangements in place for their child, whether agreed informally, recorded in an agreement, or provided for in court orders.

### **Purpose:**

- To comply with all legal requirements
- To provide for the welfare and best interests of the students
- To recognise the role of both parents in school life

### **Guidelines:**

#### **Guardianship Status**

Usually, a child's parents are joint guardians of their child from birth (often referred to as natural guardians) if they are both recorded on the child's birth certificate, and/or are in a legally recognised relationship (i.e. marriage, civil union, de facto relationship).

Separated parents remain guardians of their children, subject to any court orders that are in place.

Guardians have a responsibility for the child's care, development, and upbringing. Guardians are responsible for making education decisions about their child and have a duty to consult with each other.

The Family Court can appoint other adults, such as a new partner or grandparents, as guardians. A child can have more than two guardians.

The Family or High Court may appoint itself as a child's legal guardian and may appoint the Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children to act as its agent.

#### **Agreements and court orders**

Day-to-day care arrangements for children can be agreed informally, recorded in a formal agreement, or determined by a parenting order from the Family Court.

It is the responsibility of parents and guardians to provide the school with a written copy of any agreement or court order related to the care of their child as soon as possible. This ensures the school can support the family in following such agreements/orders. It is also very important that family contact details are kept up to date.

Any such agreements/orders will be shared with the student's main teacher, and any other key staff, as considered necessary by the principal. All personal information is kept strictly confidential and documentation regarding such agreements/orders will be held in a separate file.

### **When custody arrangements are unclear**

If a parent or guardian has not given the school reasonable notice of a change in custody/care arrangements for their child, the school may choose to follow the arrangement already in place.

### **Contact Rights and the School.**

Except where there are any court orders or protection order in place, both parents, and any other guardians, are entitled to:

- receive school newsletters and a copy of the child's school reports
- discuss their child's educational progress with the principal and teachers
- be consulted on the need for specialist educational services
- see their child's school records, subject to any legal restrictions
- participate in disciplinary hearings involving their child
- receive information through the school's class representative system
- vote in board elections
- participate in parent groups or meetings and other school functions

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

The school appreciates parents being able to attend the same parent interviews where possible.

### **Disputes over guardianship status**

Any dispute over the rights of separated parents regarding their child's education, day-to-day care arrangements, and communication should be resolved by the parents, or through the courts. It is not the job of the principal or the child's teacher to adjudicate.

### **Impartiality**

The school will remain neutral and not favour one parent over another. Staff will not engage in conversations with one parent about the other's care of, and interactions with, the child or discuss matters pertaining to particular care or contact arrangements in front of students.

In cases where staff are concerned about the child's wellbeing, the principal is to be advised and appropriate action will be taken in line with other school policies. This may include:

- Meeting with one or both parents
- Contacting Oranga Tamariki
- Contacting the child's court appointed lawyer
- Immediately contacting the police if a Protection Order is breached.

### **Contact Rights and the School**

As a rule, parental contact visits should take place outside of school hours to avoid disruption for students and to ensure the school is a place where students feel settled and can focus on their learning without distraction.

A student's learning should not be disrupted by unnecessary communication throughout the day (e.g. texts, social media, phone calls, or email). The school also considers it inappropriate for personal mail or emails to be sent to a student at school by someone who is subject to a court order or other legal restriction. School staff will question such communication in these situations.

Any parent, guardian or other person wishing to have contact with a student during school hours must follow the school's visitors' procedures.

If the school has concerns about a person wanting to contact a student at school (e.g. doubt over identity, good faith, or legal rights), they should follow the agreement or court order related to the care of the child held by the school.

#### **Lawyer for the child**

A court appointed lawyer for the child may request to meet with the child at school. The school will facilitate this where possible in accordance with the wishes of the child.

All requests by the lawyer for the child for information will be actioned in accordance with the principles of the Privacy Act 1993, the Education Act 1989 and the Official Information Act 1982. Staff who receive such requests should refer the request to the Principal on receipt.

#### **Surnames**

Hauraki Primary School uses the student's name as provided at enrolment, unless advised otherwise.

Where conflict arises, the school uses the student's legal name (i.e. the name on their birth certificate or as changed by court proceedings).

**Signed:** 

**Date:** 25/2/20

**Chairperson Board of Trustees**

**Review Date:** Term 1, 2023

#### **Related Policies:**

**Child Protection  
Discipline**