RATIONALE
This policy is based on the Gospel values of freedom and justice for all people and an underlying belief in the dignity and uniqueness of each individual. The family is recognised as being the unit primarily responsible for the care and protection of the child. This policy is also reflective of the fact that the traditional family of father, mother and children may sometimes be affected by the result of separation, divorce, death or changes in social norms and values.

Catholic schools operate in a wider community context where legal requirements exist and where they have an obligation to:
- Comply with all relevant state and national legislation
- Protect children
- Provide a secure and safe environment
- Intervene on behalf of children
- Actively work towards empowering children
- Ensure the principles of care, protection and safety are implemented

BACKGROUND
In family law proceedings involving children, the Family Court is able to make the following main types of orders:

1. **Residence**
   A residence order specifies with whom the child shall live.

2. **Contact**
   Contact (formerly known as access) is the right of a child to have regular contact with both parents and confers on the non-residential parent the right to see the child at pre-arranged times.

3. **Specific Issues**
   A specific issues order stipulates who has particular duties, powers, responsibility or authority in relation to the child.

4. **Shared responsibility**
   The Family Court commonly makes orders:
   
   (a) which give residence with day-to-day responsibility to one parent and contact to the other parent, while giving both parents joint long term responsibility for the child’s care, welfare and development; OR

   (b) which give one parent both long term and day to day responsibility, and giving contact to the other.

PROCEDURE
ALL visitors to the school are required to sign in. ALL non-enrolling parents should have a clear purpose for being in the school (signed in) which includes:
- meeting with Principal/Deputy,
- meeting with student’s class teacher,
- paying fees,
- collecting notices etc.
If meeting with the class teacher a staff member (usually the Principal/Deputy) will escort the parent to the meeting.

The school is not to be a place for non-enrolling parents who do not have rights to have contact with the child pursuant to a Family Court Order to take it upon themselves to have additional contact with the child.

Support and duty of care for the enrolled child should be the school’s highest priority.

ORDERS AND RELEASE OF INFORMATION

1. In the absence of a Family Court Order to the contrary, both parents have joint responsibility for the day-to-day care, welfare and development of the child. This responsibility confers (among other things) the right to determine which school a child shall attend.

2. In cases where the child is the subject of a Court Order, the parents must make this known to the Principal and must provide the School with a current copy of any Court Order(s) that exist. The School has an obligation under the Family Law Act to comply with any such Court Orders. The school must keep a copy of the Order in the student’s file. The Principal is to take careful notes of operative dates and of interim orders which may be superseded by a subsequent order.

3. As a general rule, both enrolling parents of a child are entitled to information relating to the child and it is important that the ‘Release of Information’ section in the enrolment form is brought to their attention.

4. As a general rule, no information at all should be supplied to a non-enrolling parent without the consent of the enrolling parent unless there is a specific order of the Family Court to the contrary. The release of information in all cases should only occur with the express authority of the Principal. Factors to be considered in each case are:
   - the contractual relationship between the School and the parents
   - the contents of any Family Court Order
   - whether the release of information is in the best interest of the child
   - any other factors the Principal considers relevant

5. The School is not the place to resolve family disputes, nor should school staff be involved in such disputes. No information should be provided by any staff member of the school to either party involved in a family dispute, without the express permission of the Principal.

6. As a general guide, no information should be provided to either party involved in a family dispute that could be seen as the school taking sides in the family dispute. In such situations the school should advise the parents or parties involved that this is the policy of CESA and such information would only be provided by the school under subpoena from the courts.

7. In all matters relating to family disputes and Family Court Orders, the School’s primary responsibility is to ensure the wellbeing and safety of the child.