



# Parents contacting their child at school or preschool

## Port Wakefield Primary School

Sometimes parents or guardians try to use a school or preschool for personal contact with their child during school hours. For example, phoning the school and asking to speak to their child, or visiting the school during lunch. This is usually not appropriate.

This page explains:

- when it's inappropriate
- how to respond when parents try to do this.

Principals and directors should share these instructions with their staff.

These instructions do not apply to departmental sites which are authorised to be used by parents or guardians to have supervised access with their children pursuant to court orders or foster care arrangements. If you are unsure whether your particular school, preschool or service is an exception to the instructions, contact the Legal Services Directorate.

### Parents should not use schools or preschools for personal contact with their child

It's not appropriate for a parent to call a school or preschool to speak to their child. It's also not appropriate for a parent to visit a school or preschool to spend time with their child during school hours. This applies regardless of whether the family is separated and regardless of whether there are Family Court orders in place.

### Situations where personal contact is okay

There are some situations where parents phoning or visiting the school or preschool to contact their child is okay. Valid reasons for this include:

- passing on information in an emergency
- collecting a child for an appointment
- attending special events
- educational meetings
- assembly, sports day and similar school or preschool events
- volunteering or working at the school or preschool.

Aside from these reasons, parents must not be permitted to disrupt their child's learning. Contact should only occur subject to any applicable Family Court orders or intervention orders.

### Stay neutral and don't get involved in family matters

Departmental employees must maintain a neutral position and should not become involved in private family matters.

## Politely decline requests to contact children

Sometimes parents will ask your school or preschool to allow phone calls or visits between the parent and their child during school or preschool hours (including break times). You should politely decline the request if its purpose is for the parent to obtain contact with their child.

## Explain that schools or preschools should not be used for personal contact

Explain to parents that providing parents with a place to make personal contact with their child is not the school or preschool's purpose. Schools and preschools have a duty of care for students and must remain child-focused at all time. This means maintaining a learning environment free from pressure or interference from private family matters. Personal contact with parents can disrupt this environment, interfere with learning, and cause distress.

## Consider sending a letter to the parent

If a parent has tried to contact their child at school or preschool, you may wish to send them a letter explaining why the school or preschool doesn't allow it. The letter should:

- confirm the school or preschool's position on private family matters
- explain the school or preschool's expectations of all parents.

Before sending the letter, forward it to [Education.LegalServices@sa.gov.au](mailto:Education.LegalServices@sa.gov.au) for review.

## Unhappy parents can seek independent legal advice or lodge a complaint

If a parent is unhappy, encourage them to seek independent legal advice on how to address their concerns through mediation or the Courts. You should also let them know that they can lodge a complaint with the department's Customer Feedback unit:

Phone: 1800 677 435

Email: [Education.EducationComplaint@sa.gov.au](mailto:Education.EducationComplaint@sa.gov.au).

## Contact SAPOL if the parent exhibits aggressive behaviour

If at any point in time the parent exhibits aggressive behaviour, immediately contact SAPOL on 131 444.

Legal Services directorate

Phone: 8226 1555

Email: [education.legalrequests@sa.gov.au](mailto:education.legalrequests@sa.gov.au)