



Separated Parents Policy

1. Introduction

We aim to work with each child's parents or carers and maintain contact in the best interests of children in the event of family separation. This policy has been created to minimise any adverse impact of separation on pupils' learning and wellbeing and to clarify to all parties what is expected from separated parents and what can be expected from the schools.

The person(s) with parental responsibility who applied for the child's admission should have involved all others with parental responsibility in making the decision to apply. They should have provided details of all those with parental responsibility for a child. Where this has not happened we welcome direct contact from those with parental responsibility providing their own details. The School cannot be held responsible for excluding a parent or person with parental responsibility if the information has not been provided to them.

2. Definition of "parent"

Section 576 of The Education Act 1996 defines a parent as:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not
- includes any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child. For example, this may be a foster carer or family and friends carer who do not have parental responsibility but have been delegated the responsibility for taking day-to-day decisions about the child.

Parents, as defined above, are entitled to share in the decisions about the child's education and to be treated equally by Schools unless there is a court order limiting an individual's exercise of parental responsibility. All individuals who have parental responsibility, or care for a child, have the same rights and entitlements as natural parents and neither parent will be given priority over another. These entitlements include:

- receiving copies of 2 year reports
- attending parent meetings
- receiving newsletters
- information about School trips
- School photographs relating to their child
- participation in any exclusion procedure
- dealing with any medical issues that arise

The School recognises that whilst the parents of some pupils may be separated, divorced or estranged, they are still entitled to the above and this entitlement cannot be restricted without a Court order. If the parents are involved in proceedings before the Court directly relating to the child(ren), the parents should seek the Court's permission to disclose the Court order(s) made to the School.

3. Parental responsibility

Parental responsibility is defined in the Children Act 1989 and means the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority that a parent has for their child. In addition to a child's natural parents, it can be acquired by Court order, being appointed a guardian, adopting a child or a formal agreement.

The information provided to the School when the child was enrolled detailing who has parental responsibility for the child will be presumed to be correct unless a Court order proves otherwise. Parents are requested to bring into school their child's birth certificate to ascertain who has parental responsibility. The School will be reliant on such information being provided as accurate and true.

The information provided regarding the address(es) where the child lives will be presumed to be correct unless the School is provided with a copy of a Court order setting out arrangements for where the child should live.

Every parent with parental responsibility for a child has an equal right to be engaged with decisions regarding their education. Unless there is a Court order limiting an individual's exercise of parental responsibility the School must treat all parents equally and must provide them with the same information.

Where contact has been limited by a Court order, the parent still has the right to receive information about the child and be involved in decisions regarding their education and welfare, unless a Court order restricts what information they can receive or removes their parental responsibility. We will not remove a parent's contact details without such a Court order being in place or until a parent asks for their **own** contact details to be removed.

4. Schools' responsibilities

The school will:

- make every effort to obtain details of all parents and guardians, their names, addresses and contact details when a child is registered and before the official start date
- record evidence of when/how information was requested where the details of non-residing parents are not provided including requesting written confirmation from resident parents that contact details of non-resident parents is unknown
- ensure that names and addresses of all parents, where known, are included in the Schools SIMS database and in pupil records
- ensure that names and addresses of all parents are forwarded to any school to which the pupil moves.
- note details of court orders in a pupil's record'

- communicate to the resident parent that the non-resident parent is entitled to be involved in their child's education and request that information is passed on to them if contact information is not held by the school

5. Disputes and disagreements

We hope that parents and all those with parental responsibility will support the School in working together for the benefit of their children.

Disagreements between parents must be resolved between the parents and cannot be resolved by the school. Parents should seek to resolve contact issues without involving the School. The School will not mediate, "take sides" or act as an intermediary between parents who do not communicate with each other.

In all cases where parents and/or those with parental responsibility cannot agree on various issues, parents should seek independent legal advice as to the options available to resolve those issues, either by agreement or by obtaining a Court order.

The school will maintain an open door policy with both parents and will be available to discuss any issues.

6. Changes in family circumstances

We ask parents to inform us when there is a change in family circumstances so that we can sensitively support the child. We expect parents to update emergency contact details when these change for one or both parents and/or if there is a new arrangement for collecting children, or in particular if there is any Court order that has been made.

We recognise the sensitivity of some situations and all staff are aware of the need for discretion and confidentiality. School staff will be informed on a strict need-to-know basis.

7. Collecting a child from school

If a non-resident parent, requests to take the child, contrary to the notified arrangements, the resident parent will be asked to confirm that they are aware of this. The Head Teacher will exercise discretion on the decision to allow a child to leave the premises with a non-resident parent.

8. Communication between School and separated parents

Letters, newsletters and general updates are sent via the schools app.

All parents and carers are entitled to sign up to the school app and information about applying is given on registration. The school will notify the parent registering the child that all parents have a right to access the app and request that this information is passed on to all those with parental responsibility.

Requests for copies of letters and information about school events can be made by parents directly in written or electronic form if they do not have access to the app. All parents are encouraged to use the app so that they can keep up to date with school events and information in a timely manner.

The School is able to deal with separate requests for invitations to School events and performances made by separated, divorced or estranged parents who have parental responsibility. Parents are expected to communicate directly on such matters if they can although in some instances the School recognises that this may not be possible should there be a Court order in place preventing the parties from contacting each other.

The School will try to comply with requests; however, in certain circumstances, and as stated above, it will not always be possible, for example when a Court order preventing contact is in place or for a one off event.

In all circumstances, we aim to maintain our open-door policy with all parents and appointments can be made to discuss any issues.

9. Parents' evening appointments

We will offer separate parents' evening appointments for separated, divorced or estranged parents who have parental responsibility.

10. Change of name

A parent can only change their child's name (forename and/or surname) either by both parents providing a letter confirming such consent or by an order of the Court. Unless either of the above are provided, the child will be known and addressed by their birth name as recorded on their birth certificate.

The School is under no obligation to do so but they may, effect an informal change of name if that is requested by the parent(s) for example (a) verbally addressing a child (b) name on books etc. It is important to note that the School database, unless changed by an order of the Court, will reflect the child's name at birth. In addition, and as stated, any informal change of name addressing the child is at the School's complete discretion after the School has taken into account all of the circumstances.

11. Obtaining Consent for Off Site Activities

If parental consent is required for outings or activities, the school will seek consent from the resident parent, unless the decision is likely to have a long-term and significant impact on the child or the non-resident parent has requested to be asked for consent in all such cases. In cases where the school considers it necessary to seek consent from both parents, it is possible that one gives consent and the other withholds it. In such cases, the school will assume that parental consent has not been given.

12. Access to School information

Key information is available on the website for each school. Parents also receive information via the school app or via email if this is requested.

For parents who do not have access to the internet paper copies of communications may be requested from the School.