

Blakedown C E Primary School

Working with Separated Families

Policy Number 6.21

Working with Separated Families



Working with Separated Families Policy

(see also Safeguarding, Equality Policies)

1 STRATEGY

- 1.1 Schools have a legal duty to work in partnership with families and to involve all those with parental responsibility in their child's education (see Appendix A - Guidance on Parental Responsibility). This obligation on schools continues even when family circumstances change; for example, relationships between parents break down.
- 1.2 It is generally in the best interests of children if parents and schools can work together. Evidence shows that after separation, children do best when those around them cooperate, provide stability and avoid conflict. We understand that this can be difficult and parents can become estranged.
- 1.3 Our aim is to work with all parties to promote positive family involvement, so that children can still experience a sense of **joy** at school and emotional stability so that they are able to **achieve** their best. This policy clarifies what is expected from separated parents and carers, the school and its staff

2 POLICY

- 2.1 We recognise that when parents separate that this can be a difficult situation for all concerned. Our main priority is for the child and we hope parents will make every effort to recognise this and support us and their child.
- 2.2 School must treat all parents equally, unless a court order limits an individual's exercise of parental responsibility. Everyone who has parental responsibility has a right to receive information about the child. This is the case whether they live with the child or not.
- 2.3 Parents and partners may need to check on who has official parental responsibility and provide evidence of this. We may ask for sight of a child's birth certificate on joining the school to confirm parental responsibility.
- 2.4 There is no requirement to inform one parent about communication with the other parent.
- 2.5 It will not be the responsibility of the school to pass on information to other children's groups or bodies unless there is a safeguarding issue.
- 2.6 This policy will apply unless the school is made aware of any Court Orders in place and has a copy of the documentation as confirmation.

3 PROCEDURE

3.1 Rights of those with parental responsibility.

The DfE's guidance on parental responsibilities referred to above, explains that individuals who have parental responsibility for a child have the right to:

- 3.1.1 Receive information, such as pupil reports.
- 3.1.2 Participate in activities, for example voting in elections for parent governors.
- 3.1.3 Be informed about meetings involving the child; for example, parent consultation evenings and a governors' meeting about the child's exclusion.
- 3.1.4 Timely information about upcoming events provided.
- 3.1.5 Newsletters sent electronically or by post to non-residential parents.

3.2 Guidance for Headteachers on managing parental responsibility.

The DfE's guidance also provides advice for Headteachers, who should:

- 3.2.1 Ask parents or guardians for the names and addresses of all parents when they register a pupil.
- 3.2.2 Ensure that names and addresses of all parents, where known are included in the admission register and also in pupil records and are available to the pupil's teachers.
- 3.2.3 Ensure that names and addresses of all parents are forwarded to any school to which the pupil moves.
- 3.2.4 Ensure that details of court orders are noted in a pupil's record.
- 3.2.5 Where the address of a non-resident parent is unknown, tell the resident parent that the non-resident parent is entitled to be involved in their child's education and ask that information is passed on to them.

3.3 Name changes for children.

- 3.3.1 There must be consent of both parents after divorce or separation for a change in name of a child or children.
- 3.3.2 A separated parent who has parental responsibility but no longer lives with the child may refuse to consent to changing the child's surname. In such a case the parent wishing to change the child's name would need to apply to the courts for permission to do so.
- 3.3.3 Before registering a change of name, schools need to ensure all those with parental responsibility have consented.

3.4 What the schools expect from parents/carers/Parental Responsibility.

- 3.4.1 Parents will need to provide information via the contact sheet as to the people we may call on in the event of an accident or emergency; these will be called in the sequence recorded on the sheet.

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- 3.4.2 The school will need to be informed as to who is able to give messages to the school regarding the child's welfare such as a change in travel arrangements or collection for medical appointments; this may include new partners.
- 3.4.3 Parents will need to ensure children are organised in terms of having PE kits, reading books, homework etc and that these are in the right location to bring into school.
- 3.4.4 As part of the Induction Pack, when children start school, all parents will receive a copy of this policy. (*Working with Separated Parents.*)
- 3.4.5 The information provided to school when the pupil is enrolled, detailing whether both parents have parental responsibility, will be presumed to be correct unless a court order or original birth certificate proving otherwise is provided to the school.
- 3.4.6 Separated parents are required to inform the school and to return a form (*Appendix B*) indicating ways in which they would like to be kept informed.
- 3.4.7 Children's welfare and safety are paramount and where there are issues over access to children, the parent with whom the child resides should contact the school immediately.
- 3.4.8 Where there is a court restraining order in place, a copy needs to be retained by the school, which will put in place measure to ensure the child is not released to a named individual.
- 3.4.9 Where an absent parent has parental responsibility and there is no court order in place, the school is required to allow the child home with them; however the Headteacher is able to use her discretion and would seek clarification if it was felt there was a child protection issue.
- 3.4.10 Parents who have joint custody of the child/children are requested to keep the school informed, in writing, of any disputes they have with each other regarding the collection of children.
- 3.4.11 Leave of absence request forms signed by one parent must be accompanied by a letter of consent from the other parent.
- 3.4.12 We would not expect to send emergency text messages to absent parents, which give information on cancelled activities and reminders unless we are asked in writing to do so.
- 3.4.13 It is the responsibility of parents to inform the school when there is a change in the family's circumstances. We need to be kept up to date with contact details, arrangement for collecting children and emergencies.
- 3.4.14 The welfare of the child is at the heart of all we do and the Headteacher and Governors maintain the right to discontinue any of the above if it is deemed to be significantly against the child's best interests. Court orders may also alter the position the school adopts.

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3.5 What parents/carers can expect from the school/School Responsibility

- 3.5.1 All diary dates, newsletters and relevant letters are available on our website at www.blakedowncofeprimary.co.uk.
- 3.5.2 Class emails will be sent to both parents. Parents are responsible for providing a correct email address. Occasionally paper letters are sent home with pupils and we expect parents to communicate these messages to each other as and when appropriate.
- 3.5.2 We will hold one parents' evening appointment per child where both parents are welcome and we expect parents to communicate with each other regarding these arrangements. Unfortunately, the school is unable to offer individual appointments as the school does not have the capacity to support this.
- 3.5.3 We expect parents to liaise and communicate directly with each other in matters such as the ordering of school photographs; tickets for performances, invitations to open days and other instances. In cases where there are only 2 tickets for each child, these will be given to each parent first. (Providing contact details for each parent is known.)
- 3.5.4 Both parents are entitled to receive formal documentation such as reports. Reports will be sent to the parent with whom the child resides with, the expectation that he/she will share the report with the other parent. The school will email copies of reports to the non-custodial parent if a written request is submitted.
- 3.5.5 Both parents are legally entitled to collect their child from school unless a court order is provided that states otherwise. In all cases, the school will be mindful of its safeguarding responsibilities and may use its discretion not to send a child home with a particular parent.
- 3.5.6 Our responsibility is to inform parents of their child's progress and any issues which may arise. However, the school will always have the right to refuse entry or enter into any communication with parents who are abusive and use inappropriate language or aggressive behaviour towards any member of staff.
- 3.5.7 Where schools need parental consent to outings and activities, school should seek the 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 the case where one parent gives consent and other withholds it, it will be assumed that parental consent has not been given.

3.6 Suggested procedure for all staff to follow to ensure there is no breach of data protection.

3.6.1 On answering the telephone.

- 3.6.1.1 If asked if a child/ren are registered in the school, (in the case of a known absent parent or parent the school staff has never met):

'I am sorry we cannot disclose information about children over the phone. If you would like to request information please write to the school. You will be asked to provide photographic proof of your identity (e.g. passport, driving licence) and proof of your relationship to the child/ren. Please also include a copy of one of the following documents: Child's Birth Certificate; Marriage Certificate or Parental Responsibility Agreement. On receipt of these documents, we will send you (Appendix B).'

3.6.1.2 This procedure should be visible in the school office to ensure the correct information is given.

3.6.1.3 If the children are not in the school the same answer as above should be given.

3.6.1.4 If we have met the parent, who is now no longer living with the family and he/she requests information, we should ask them to complete the form in Appendix B.

3.6.2 In person

3.6.2.1 If a parent unknown to the school arrives at the school unannounced, asking for confirmation that children are at the school. We would say we cannot confirm information that children in the school without documents proving the identity of the person asking. We would ask them to put their request in writing to the school together with photographic evidence (e.g. passport, driving licence) of their identity.

3.6.2.2 The resident parent would not be informed of the absent parent contacting the school by anyone other than the Headteacher who is under no obligation to do so.

4. MONITOR AND REVIEW

4.1 This policy is monitored by the governing body and will be reviewed every three years or before if necessary.

Working with Separated Families - Appendix A

Guidance on Parental Responsibility.

In order to help us to look after your children whilst they are in our care, we are required to ask you to provide certain information, such as name of parents, address, contact details. We are also required to ask who has Parental Responsibility for your child. This is important because it allows us to be sure who has the right to make decisions about your child's education and medical treatment. However, we are aware that this is a very specific legal term and many of you may be unaware of how it applies. This appendix aims to provide you with an explanation of who has parental responsibility so that you are able to provide us with accurate information.

- All mothers automatically have Parental Responsibility.
- If a child's parents were married at the time of the birth, both parents automatically have Parental Responsibility.
- For children born from the 1st December 2003 where the father's name is on the birth certificate, the father and mother will both have Parental Responsibility.
- In all other cases, father are required to officially obtain Parental Responsibility.
- Parental Responsibility cannot be lost, except by legal adoption, although it does not guarantee contact.

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Working with Separated Families - Appendix B

At Blakedown CE Primary School we are committed to working with families and understand the importance of continuing the relationship between school and parents who do not live with their child.

Please complete the form below and return to the school office indicating how you would like to be kept informed about your child's education.

Name of parent:

Name of child/children:

Address:

Telephone numbers (including mobile/work):

Email:

Please circle the best way to send information to you:

Via your child

By Parentmail (email)

By post

Please tick the information you would like to receive:

- Weekly newsletter
- Information about upcoming events
- Parents' Evenings
- Additional copies of end of year reports
- Copies of Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
- Order form for photos.
- Invites for parent workshops.