

Ashford CE Primary School



Separated Parents Policy

Updated Policy: 28 March 2023

Approved by FGB: 28 March 2023

Signed: _____ P Wells _____

Chair of Governors

Separated Parents Policy

Our School Vision

We are a caring Christian community where everyone adopts an “I can” attitude; everyone feels valued, safe and loved by God. We celebrate our God-given individuality, achievements and talents and we aspire, with God’s help, to become the best that we can be. We believe that each one of us has the ability to achieve our highest potential, living and learning in the fullness of God.

I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.

Philippians 4v13

Introduction

Research and experience have shown that separated parents can become particularly estranged, especially during the initial stages of the split. This is very often traumatic for any children concerned and unfortunately these personal family problems can have an impact on the schools the children attend.

This policy is an attempt to minimise any impact and to clarify to all parties what is expected from separated parents and what can be expected from the school and its staff.

We will maintain our open-door policy with all parents, and the class teacher and/or Head of School/Senior Leader will be available by appointment to discuss any issues.

Definition of Parent

The definition of a parent for school purposes is much wider than for any other situation. For the purposes of education law, the DfE consider a “parent” to include:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not
- 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.

Parents as defined above are entitled to share in the decisions that are made about their child and to be treated equally by schools. In particular, these entitlements include:

- Appeal against admission decisions
- Ofsted & school based questionnaires

- Participate in any exclusion procedure
- Attend parent meetings/school events
- Have access to school records and receive copies of school reports, newsletters, invitations to school events, school photographs relating to their child and information about school trips.

Consents, for examples for trips or photograph/social media use etc, would normally be accepted from the resident parent unless a parent has requested that the school seek their consent in all such cases. This request should be made in writing to the school. Where parents are unable to agree on consent this will be treated by the school as if the consent has not been given.

The Governing Body recognises that while the parents of some pupils may be divorced or estranged, they are entitled to the above and this entitlement cannot be restricted without a specific court order. In particular, the school does not have the power to act on the request of one parent to restrict another.

Parental Responsibility

The information provided to the school when the child was enrolled detailing parents with parental responsibility for the child will be presumed to be correct unless a court order or original birth certificate proving otherwise is provided to the school. Similarly, the information provided on the address(es) where the child resides will be presumed to be correct unless a court order proving otherwise is provided to the school.

At Ashford CE School, our sole wish is to promote the best interests of the child, working in partnership with all parents unless otherwise directed by a court order.

Upon receipt of any court order restricting access to a parent, the school retains the right to consult the Local Authority before taking immediate action. The school is only obliged to comply with an order if it is properly notified and has received a copy for its files, and only to the extent that it relates to the school. The school also has no responsibility for enforcing any court order. In the event that the school is not informed of the existence of such an order, neither parent will have rights superior to the other.

Parents are encouraged to resolve contact issues without involving the school directly. The interests of the child will always be paramount when deciding whether to accommodate a request from an estranged parent.

Parents are responsible for ensuring that up to date contact information is provided to the school. This can be via an email to the school office or through the Parent Lite app which enables parents to review the parent contact details that are held in our Management Information System (SIMS). Parents should be aware that they can see all contacts for their child and should only change their own information unless they have the agreement of the other parent.

Change in parent responsibility:

- It is the responsibility of the parents to inform school when there is a change in family circumstances. The school needs to be kept up to date with contact details, arrangements for collecting children and emergencies. Where parents request that the priority contact list

for their child is changed this will need to be agreed by all those who have parental responsibility.

- We encourage parents to tell us at an early stage if there is a change in family circumstances. Whenever possible, staff will be informed of such changes so that suitable support can be offered. We will, however, recognise the sensitivity of some situations and maintain the level of confidentiality requested by parents as far as possible.
- Newsletters **are** sent to all parents, **for whom we hold an e mail address**, via our school email system. These updates will contain all the main events within school, including productions, sports days, parent evenings, class trips, etc. Wherever possible we would expect parents to communicate these messages to each other as and when appropriate. In addition, all parents are recommended to regularly use the school's website – it contains back dated newsletters and has a range of information and links.
- Wherever possible we will hold one parents' evening appointment per child, where all parents are welcome. We would usually expect parents to communicate with each other regarding these arrangements. On request the school will consider separate appointments or if there is a court order in place restricting parents attending the same appointment.
- Wherever possible we expect that parents should liaise and communicate directly with each other in matters such as the ordering of school photographs; tickets for performances and other instances. If this is not possible, we would ask parents to put their request for all such instances to be handled separately in writing via the school office. This request will be permanently held on the school database until its removal is requested in writing.

Changing a Surname

A change of a child's name is private law and should be resolved between parents.

The school will not change a child's surname in our records without written evidence that consent has been given by both parents and/or anyone who has parental responsibility.

Progress Reports and Pupil Records

Any parent has the right to receive progress reports and review pupil records **for** their children. If the parents are separated or divorced, progress reports will be sent to the parent and address in the school's records specifying where the child resides with the expectation that he/she will share the report with the other parent. If this is not appropriate, we would ask parents to put their request for separate copies in writing via the school office. This request will be permanently held on the school database until its removal is requested in writing. If the child is subject to a joint residence order and the school's records formally capture that the child resides at two addresses, then progress reports will be sent to both addresses.

Disagreements

Disagreements between parents must be resolved between the parents and cannot be resolved by the school or **L**ocal **A**uthority. In the event that the parents are unable to agree with one another on decisions regarding their child's educational programme, including but not limited to placement, participation in extracurricular activities, and consent to evaluation and services, the school will arrange a meeting with all parents (preferably together or separately if required) to attempt to assist the parents to resolve the situation and if it cannot be resolved may refer the matter to the relevant department of the Local Authority.

The school will release children to parents in accordance with arrangements notified to the school. If one parent seeks to remove the child from school in contravention of the notified arrangements, and the parent to whom the child would normally be released has not consented the following steps will be followed:

- The Head of School or Senior Leader will meet with the parent seeking to remove the child and, in his/her presence, telephone the parent to whom the child would normally be released and explain the request.
- If the parent to whom the child would normally be released agrees, the child may be released and the records will reflect that the permission was granted orally.
- In the event that the parent to whom the child would normally be released cannot be reached, the Head of School or staff member dealing with the issue may make a decision based upon all relevant information available to him/her.
- The Head of School or staff member may have to refuse permission if consent cannot be obtained.
- During any discussion or communication with parents, the child will be supervised by an appropriate member of school staff in a separate room.
- In extreme circumstances if there is a belief that a possible abduction of the child may occur or if the parent is disruptive, the police **will** be notified immediately.