

Policy for Working with Separated Parents

Introduction:

1. This Policy aims to set out how staff at St. Joseph's Primary School will work with families, in the best interests of children, in some specific, and potentially challenging circumstances; for example after parents separate.

Principles:

2. School must uphold the current legal situation that applies to that child. In matters where interpretation is unclear the decision of the Head teacher is final.
3. We expect all members of the school family to treat everyone with care, courtesy and respect. We see education as a partnership between parents/carers and school and will work to promote this view.

Aims:

4. St. Joseph's Primary School aims to work in partnership with families. We aim to involve all those with parental responsibility, who have requested that they be involved, in their child's education. (see Appendix A- Guidance on Parental Responsibility).

Evidence of parental responsibility

5. Parents of children joining the school are required to provide the school with their child's birth certificate, or other evidence of parental responsibility, for example a child arrangement order, to school. This helps the school ascertain who has Parental Responsibility. At this stage the school will discuss the contents of this Policy if required.
6. Separated parents i.e. those with parental responsibility who do not live with the child, are required to inform the school and to return a form (Appendix B) indicating ways in which they would like to be kept informed.
7. See Appendix A for guidance upon parental responsibility.

Working with separated parents:

8. St. Joseph's Primary School accept that the partnership between school and home continues even when family circumstances change, for example, when relationships between parents break down.
9. It is generally in the best interests of the child if parents and schools can work together.
10. Below is a list of the ways in which we will work with separated parents - those who have parental responsibility but who do not live with the child, to continue to involve them in their child's education.

- Newsletters - available on the website
- Timely information about upcoming events provided via the website.
- Separate appointments offered for parent's evenings at mutually convenient times.
- Additional copies of end of year reports provided either in the post, or electronically.

Safeguarding

11. It is the responsibility of everyone working with a child to safeguard and promote the welfare of that child (Keeping children safe in education September 2018 DFE). Children's welfare and safety are paramount.
12. Where there are issues over access to children, the parent with whom the child resides should contact the school immediately.
13. Where there is a court restraining order in place, the school will put in place measures to ensure the child is not released to a named individual. A copy of the restraining order should be brought to school and placed in the child's confidential file.
14. Where a separated parent has parental responsibility and there is no court order in place, the school has no option but to allow the child home with that parent. However, if it was felt that there was any safeguarding or child protection concerns, the Headteacher is able to use discretion and would seek further clarification and advice.
15. The welfare of the child is at the heart of all we do and the Headteacher and Governors of St. Joseph's Primary School maintain the right to discontinue any of the above if it is deemed to be significantly against the child's best interests.
16. The school will remain impartial with parents at all times.
17. The school will not get involved in parental disputes by providing any information to either party or to their legal representatives unless ordered to by a Court of Law. Where there are any safeguarding concerns, the safeguarding and child protection arrangements will apply in the normal way. The following organisations may be able to help you:

Moving on Project

Changing Futures North East.

(M'bro, Hartlepool, Stockton & East Durham)

Free service to help reach an agreement on family issues and financial matters and help parents and children move on from the difficulties of separation. It is lottery funded

www.changingfuturesne.co.uk/moving-on

01429869247

Community Legal Advice

This offers free and confidential legal help direct to the public.

They can also offer advice re; securing a specialist legal advisor in the local area.

08453454345

www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk

Law Society;
02072421222
www.lawsociety.org.uk

Family Rights Group;
A national charity that gives free, independent advice to parents
08088010366
www.frg.org.uk

Citizens Advice;
www.citizenadvice.org.uk

Family Justice Council;
www.family-justice-council.org.uk

18. Relevant Policies, Guidelines and Documentation

National Policies, Guidance and Documentation

• **Understanding and dealing with issues related to parental responsibility: guide for schools and local authorities (DFE) January 2016**

This document sets out guidance for local authorities and schools dealing with adults who have legal rights and responsibilities for children at their school.

• **Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2018: Statutory Guidance for schools and colleges (DFE)**

This document sets out the responsibilities placed on schools and colleges to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

• **Working together to safeguard children (DFE) March 2015**

This document applies to organisations and professionals who provide services to children.

Guidance on Parental Responsibility

1. 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 etc. 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 is applied. This guidance aims to provide you with an explanation of who has parental responsibility so that you are able to provide us with accurate information.
2. **All mothers automatically have Parental Responsibility**, except for circumstances identified in section 6
3. If a child's parents were married at the time of the birth, both parents automatically have Parental Responsibility.
4. For children born from the 1st December 2003, (all children currently attending St. Joseph's Primary School), where the father's name is on the birth certificate, the father and mother will both have Parental Responsibility.
5. If the parents have not been married and the father is not named on the birth certificate, fathers are required to officially obtain Parental Responsibility.
6. Parental Responsibility cannot be lost, except by legal adoption, although it does not guarantee contact.
7. People other than biological parents can be granted parental responsibility through a child arrangements order, special guardianship order or by being asked to be a legal guardian of a child.
8. **If you would like further guidance, there is clear information on the government website www.direct.gov.uk**

Form for separated parents when the child is not living with you as a main residence.

Evidence of parental responsibility will be sought by school.

Name of Child:

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Name of Parent:

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Address:

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Telephone number/s:

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Email:

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Please confirm the information you would like to receive:

Appointments offered for parents' evenings at appropriate times.

Additional copies of end of year reports.

Other – Please state.....

Please circle the best way to send the above information to you:

Via your child:

By email

By post

By text

SignedDate.....

Name.....

To be completed by School - Evidence Check:

Type of evidence

Birth Certificate Date seen.....

Child arrangement order Date seen.....

Special guardianship order Date seen.....

Signed (school).....

Name