

<b>Whitchurch Church of England Primary School</b>	Effective Date:	May 2023
<b>Policy and Procedure Statement</b>		
 <p><b>Separated Parents</b></p>	Revision Date:	May 2026
<b>Head Teacher</b>		Mrs Cindy Pritchard
<b>DSL</b>		Mrs Cindy Pritchard
<b>Chair of Governors</b>		Mrs Jo Fisher

### **Introduction**

Research and experience has shown that separated parents can become particularly estranged, especially during the initial stages of the split. This is 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.

The definition of a parent for school purposes is much wider than for any other situation. The Education Act 1996 defines a parent as:

- All natural parents, including those that are not married;
- Any same sex parents
- Any person who has parental responsibility but is not a natural parent e.g. a Legally Appointed Guardian or the Local Authority named in a Care Order;
- Any person who has Legal Care/responsibility of a child i.e. a person with whom the child resides and who looks after the child irrespective of the relationship

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 and 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.

The Governing Body recognise 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 the other. The information provided to the school when the child was enrolled detailing whether parents have parental responsibility for the child will be presumed to be correct unless a court order or an original birth certificate proving otherwise is presented 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 presented to the school.

Our aim is to promote the best interests of the child, working in partnership with both 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 a Court 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. The school cannot and will not 'take sides' or act as an intermediary between parents who do not communicate with each other.

#### 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.

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/information updates and general information can be sent to all parents via Parentmail. These updates will contain all the main events within school, including productions, sports days, parents' evenings, class visits etc.

We will hold one parents' evening appointment per child, where all parents are welcome. We would expect parents to communicate with each other regarding these arrangements. The school will only consider separate appointments if there is a court order in place restricting parents attending the same appointment.

All written correspondence from school to parents including email regarding the child will be copied to both parents. 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 (unless you have informed the school that this is impossible).

#### Progress Reports and Records

All parents have the right to receive progress reports and review pupil records of their children. Parents who are separated or divorced, will receive copies of their child/ren's progress reports if school has been informed. 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 parents and their addresses.

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 extra-curricular activities, and consent to SEN evaluation and services, the school will arrange a meeting for 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.

### **Collection Arrangements**

The school will release children to parents in accordance with pre-arranged collection agreements which are 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 Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher will meet with the parent seeking to remove the child and in her/his 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.
- The Head Teacher or staff member may have to refuse permission if consent cannot be obtained from the other parent
- 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 should be notified immediately.

All parents can have equal access to all school information via our parent e-mail system and our website or alternatively can request in writing additional copies of communications which are not available by these means. All parents are recommended to use the school's website on a regular basis– it contains all back dated newsletters/information updates and a range of information and links.

Any parent who requires further clarification on this policy should contact the school and arrange an appointment with the Head or Deputy Head Teacher.

Policy Adopted in May 2023

Approved by Governors: May 2023