



Separated Parents Policy

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Guidance documents

- Parent Handbook
- DFE- Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility
- DFE- Parental Rights and responsibilities

Government Guidance outlines parental responsibility and who can obtain it.

Introduction

At Cassiobury Junior School, we aim to maintain contact with both parents in the best interests of their children. This policy aims to minimise any impact and to clarify to all parties what is expected from separated parents and what can be expected from the School.

It is the responsibility of the adult(s) with parental responsibility who applied for the child's admission, to involve all others with parental responsibility in making the decision to apply. They should have provided the School with details of all those with parental responsibility for a child. Where this has not happened, the School welcomes direct contact from those with parental responsibility providing their own details. However, the School cannot be held responsible for excluding an adult with parental responsibility if the information has not been provided to them.

If parents separate whilst their child already attends Cassiobury Junior School, the parents must notify the School so that the School can ensure continuing contact with both parents and, in the event that parents have separated on an acrimonious basis, the School will endeavour to accommodate each parent separately in terms of communication and any attendances at the School.

Adults with parental responsibility are entitled to:

- Receiving copies of school reports
- Have access to school records via the Data Protection Officer and the relevant guidance
- Attend parent consultations and meetings
- Receive newsletters
- Invitations to school events
- Information about school trips
- School photograph permissions
- Participation in any possible exclusion process/procedure
- Deal with any medical issues or vaccinations that may be offered

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 related to the children, the parents should seek the Court's permission to disclose the Court order/s made to the School. In addition, and should the courts require, the school will be willing to provide a letter setting out any information that is specified in a Court Order.

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 or original birth certificate proving otherwise to be provided to the School. In the event of any uncertainty by the School, the School reserves the right to take legal advice. 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, who can collect and on which days.

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 a parent asks for their OWN contact details to be removed.

Court Orders

At Cassiobury Junior School, our sole wish is to promote the best interests of the child, working in partnership with all adults with parental responsibility. If there is a Court Order in place the School will always act in ways to ensure, as best it can, that no Court Order is breached. The school can only be expected to comply with an order if it is properly notified and has received a sealed digital or paper copy for its files, and only to the extent that it relates to the school. It should be made clear that it is up to the adults with parental responsibility to ensure that they adhere to any Court Order that relates to them or their child.

The School has no responsibility for enforcing any Court Order but will endeavour to ensure that if there are stated restrictions in place with regards to the collection of the child, such restrictions are followed.

In the event that the School is informed of the existence of such an order, the adults with parental responsibility will be treated equally by the School. If there is an order in place and neither of the adults with responsibility inform the School then, if there is a breach of such an order, the School cannot be held responsible and/or liable.

Disputes and Disagreements

Cassiobury Junior School hopes that parents and all those with parental responsibility will support the school in working together for the benefit of their children,

It is very important to note that any dispute between adults sharing parental responsibility will need to be resolved between them. In all cases where adults with parental responsibility cannot agree on various issues, they should seek independent legal advice as to the options available to resolve those issues, either by agreement or by obtaining a Court Order.

Adults with parental responsibility should seek to resolve contact issues without involving the School. The School will not mediate, 'take sides', or act as an intermediary between adults who do not communicate with each other. The school does reserve the right to act in the interests of the children if put in a situation where there is conflict on school property. In these cases the school also reserves the right to involve the police.

Changes in family circumstances

We ask parents to inform the School whenever something, outside of school, such as a change in family circumstances, occurs so that we can sensitively support the children in school. We expect both adults with parental responsibility to update the School whenever emergency contact details change for one or both adults and to inform us about any new arrangement for collection of children at the end of the day, especially if directed in a Court Order. We will always aim to deal with such situations discretely.

The release of children

On being admitted to the School, and unless notified to the contrary, the School will release children to either or both adults with parental responsibility. If one parent seeks to remove children from the school in contravention of the notified arrangements (and the school is made aware of this) and the adult to whom the child would normally be released, has not consented, the following steps will be followed:

- The headteacher or designated person in charge will meet with the adult seeking to remove the child and then telephone the adult to whom the child would normally be released and explain the request.
- If the adult to whom the child would normally be released, agrees and confirms this in writing via email to ensure that there is a record of this request, then the children may be released.
- In the event that the other adult with parental responsibility cannot be contacted via reasonable attempts then the headteacher or designated person may make a decision based on the information that they have available to them.
- The headteacher or designated person may have to refuse if consent cannot be obtained.
- During any discussion with adults, the children can be supervised by an appropriate member of staff in a separate room or area.

- In very difficult circumstances, the school should contact the police.

Communication between school and separated parents

Bulletins, newsletters and general updates are sent via email to all parents using the up to date email address provided. The school is able to deal with separate requests for invitations to school events and performances made by separated, divorced or estranged parents with parental responsibility. However, the School would be grateful if parents could communicate directly on such matters if they 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 with the child or each other is in place.

In all circumstances, we aim to maintain our open-door policy with all parents. Class teachers and/or the headteacher will be available, by appointment, to discuss any issues.

Parent Consultation Appointments

Whenever requested, we aim to offer separate parent consultation appointments for separated, divorced or estranged parents who have parental responsibility. As with all parent consultation meetings, we do not offer catch up meetings for those that are missed.

Written pupil reports

Any person who is known to the School to have parental responsibility for a child has the right to receive written progress reports for their child. These will be provided to separated, divorced or estranged parents who have parental responsibility and for whom the School has up-to-date contact details.

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 and bearing wet/original signatures 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; verbally addressing a child, or writing names on their book with an informal name change. It is important to note that the School database, unless changed by Court Order, 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 once it has taken into account all of the circumstances.

Access to School Information

Key information is available on the School website. Parents may also receive information via email or text alert. All parents are encouraged to follow the school's twitter/X account.

Paper copies may be requested by the parent.