



## Separated Parent Policy

This policy takes into account the government's explanation of [Parental rights and responsibilities](#) and the Department for Education's (DfE) guidance [Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility](#)

### 1. Introduction

At Icknield Walk First School, we aim to maintain contact with both parents in the best interests of their child(ren). 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 our school.

The person(s) with parental responsibility who applied for the child's admission should have involved 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 a parent or person with parental responsibility if the information has not been provided to them.

If parents separate whilst their child already attends the school, the parents must notify the school immediately so that the school can ensure continuing contact with both parents.

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 is provided to the school. 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.

### 2. Definition of "parent"

The definition of a "parent" for School purposes is much wider than for any other situation. Section 576 of The Education Act 1996 defines a parent as:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not

- includes 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. For example, this may be a foster carer or family and friend's carer who does not have parental responsibility but has been delegated the responsibility for taking day-to-day decisions about the child.

Parents, as defined above, are entitled to share in the decisions about the child's education and to be treated equally by schools. In particular, these entitlements include, but are not limited to, the following:

- receiving copies of school reports
- having access to school records
- attending parent meetings
- receiving newsletters
- information about school trips – we will only require permission from one parent
- school photographs relating to their child
- participation in any exclusion procedure
- dealing with any medical issues that arise and/or vaccinations that may be offered.

In the case of an emergency medical issue, it is likely that contact one will be contacted first and we will endeavour to contact parent two on our contact list as soon as possible, the timing of this may vary depending upon the priorities of the staff in dealing with the child.

### **3. Court Orders**

The School has no responsibility for enforcing any court order but will endeavour to ensure that if there are restrictions in place with regards to the collection of a child, such restrictions are adhered to. If there is an order in place and neither the parents and/or those with parental responsibility inform the school, then if there is any breach of such order the school cannot be held responsible and/or liable

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.

#### **4. Disputes and disagreements**

Icknield Walk First 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 parents sharing these rights will need to be resolved between them. In all cases where parents and/or those with parental responsibility cannot agree on various issues, parents should seek independent legal advice as to the options available to resolve those issues, either by agreement or by obtaining a Court order.

Parents should seek to resolve contact issues without involving the school. The school will not mediate, “take sides” or act as an intermediary between parents who do not communicate with each other.

#### **5. Changes in family circumstances**

We ask parents to inform the school whenever something important occurs outside school, such as a change in family circumstances, so that we can sensitively support the child in school. We expect parents to update the school whenever emergency contact details change for one or both parents and/or there is a new arrangement for collecting children at the end of the school day, in particular if a new Court order is made.

We recognise the sensitivity of some situations, and all staff are aware of the need for discretion and confidentiality. School staff will be informed on a strict need-to-know basis so that suitable support can be offered.

#### **6. The release of child(ren)**

On being admitted to school, and unless notified to the contrary, the school will release children to either or both parents and/or those with parental responsibility and/or those with care of the child. 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 informed school, the following steps will be followed:

- The Head Teacher or designated deputy will meet with the parent seeking to remove the child and then 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 (such agreement to immediately be confirmed by an email to ensure there is record on the school’s files), the child may be released, and the records will reflect that the permission was granted.

- In the event that the parent to whom the child would normally be released cannot be reached, the Head Teacher or designated deputy dealing with the issue may make a decision based upon all relevant information available to him/her.
- The Head Teacher or designated deputy may have to refuse permission if consent cannot be obtained.
- During any discussion or communication with parents and/or those with parental responsibility, 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.

### **7. Communication between school and separated parents**

Bulletins, newsletters and general updates are sent via email to parents who are contact one on our data base. If a parent who is not contact one on the list requires this information to be emailed to them separately, please let the school office know. These updates contain all the main class/school events, including parents' evenings, productions, sports days and class outings and events. The school would be grateful if parents could communicate directly on matters such as concerts, parents' evenings and sports days; 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.

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

### **8. Parents' evening appointments**

We do not offer separate parents' evening appointments for separated, divorced or estranged parents who have parental responsibility; unless there is a court order in place, which means that parents cannot communicate. We suggest that if both parents cannot come to parents evening together, that one attends in October and the other one attends in February. We will send a separate written annual report to both parents.

### **9. 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 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.