Academy for Character and Excellence

Separated Parents Policy

Reference: WP/Safeguarding

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Reviewed and Updated		
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Author	**WP/RR**	**www.acexcellence.co.uk**
MAT Schools	**Redhills Primary** **Shaldon Primary** **Collaton St Mary**	**Galmpton Primary** **Totnes St John's** **Brixham Primary**

Who should use this policy?

This policy should be used by all staff working for The Academy for Character and Excellence and any family that this policy applies to.

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Statement of intent

We are a values led Trust and believe in equity of provision for all pupils within our schools. The Trust recognises that children from families whose parents are separated, or are undergoing separation, may go through traumatic changes during their time at school. With this in mind, we will make every effort to work with parents to promote the welfare of children.

We aim for our children to:

- Reach their full potential
- Develop a positive self-image
- Be responsible and make informed choices
- Be independent learners

In order to achieve this, we will provide a supportive and caring environment, promote high achievement and encourage independent learning.

This policy has been created 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.

Definitions

Schools have a legal duty to work in partnership with families and to involve all those with parental responsibility in their child's education. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines a 'parent' as:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person (a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child irrespective of relationship).

Parents as defined above must be treated equally, unless there is a court order limiting an individual's exercise of parental responsibility. 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.

Individuals who have parental responsibility, or care for a child, have the same rights as natural parents. This includes the right to:

- Receive information (e.g. pupil reports, school events etc.).
- Participate in activities (e.g. elections for parent governors).

- Give consent (e.g. for school trips).
- Be involved in meetings concerning the child (e.g. participate in an exclusion procedure, appeal against admission decisions).

Our responsibilities

The school will ask parents or guardians for the names and addresses of all parents when they register a pupil.

It is the duty of the Headteacher to ensure that names and addresses of all parents, where known, are included in the admission register and also in pupil records, and are available to the pupil's teachers.

The Headteacher will ensure that names and addresses of all parents are forwarded to any school to which the pupil moves.

The Headteacher will ensure that details of court orders are noted in the pupil's record.

Parental responsibilities

Parents of children joining the school are asked to bring their child's birth certificate. This ensures children are joining the correct year group and also helps the school ascertain who has parental responsibility.

Parents are responsible for informing the school when there is a change in family circumstances. We recognise the sensitivity of such situations and we will maintain confidentiality requested by parents as far as possible. The school will also not make judgements about individual circumstances, and both parents will be treated equally.

Where there is a court mandated restraining order in place, a copy needs to be retained by the school, which will put measures in place to ensure the child is not released to named individuals.

Parents who have joint custody of the child are requested to keep the school informed, in writing, of any disputes they have with each other regarding the collection of children.

Children's welfare and safety are paramount, where there are issues over access to children, the parent with whom the child resides should contact the school immediately.

With any school event both parents are invited and are welcome to attend, however we recognise that a separate appointment may be necessary where possible (i.e. parents' evenings).

The school expects parents to communicate with each other regarding these events.

Parents are expected to liaise and communicate directly with each other in matters such as the ordering of school photographs, tickets for performances and other instances. The school will not deal individually with these requests in view of the significantly increased workload that they represent.

Information sharing

Progress reports and pupil records

Any parent has the right to receive progress reports and review pupil records of their child. [Keeping separated families informed form is in Appendix 1]

If the parents are separated or divorced, progress reports will be sent to the parent and address noted in the school's records specifying where the child resides with the expectation that they will share the report with the other parent.

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.

The school will send copies of the progress reports to a parent with whom the child does not reside only if that parent submits a written request.

Disagreements between parents must be resolved between the parents and cannot be resolved by the school.

The school will maintain an open door policy with both parents and the class teacher will be available to discuss any issues.

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.

Information Request from absent parents

Telephone enquiries.

If asked if a child(ren) are registered in the school, (in the case of a known absent parent or parents the school staff have never met) the response will be that we cannot disclose information about children over the phone. If you would like to request information, please write to the school. You will be asked to provide photographic proof of your identity (e.g. passport, driving license) and proof of your relationship to the children. Please also include one of the following documents:

- Child's Birth Certificate
- Marriage Certificate

However, there are situations where we need to check whether someone has parental responsibility for a child. For example;

- If the child's resident parent doesn't name the non-resident parent on the registration, application or intake form
- Someone other than the people listed on the pupil's registration form is requesting information about the child
- One parent approaches the school claiming the other parent doesn't have parental responsibility, or that parental responsibility has been taken away

It may be the case that parental responsibility will need to be checked with admissions for all schools within our Trust, who will advise us further.

Requests in person

If a parent unknown to the school arrives at the school unannounced, asking for confirmation that their children are at the school, we would say we cannot confirm information that the children are in the school without documents proving the identity of the person asking. We would ask them to put their request in writing to the school with photographic evidence (as above) of their identify.

The resident parent would not be informed of the absent parent contacting the school by anyone other than the Headteacher, who is under no obligation to do so.

Collecting a child from school

Where a separated parent has parental responsibility, and requests to take the child during or at the end of the school day which the resident parent hadn't disclosed or informed the school prior to the non-resident parent making the request, the resident parent will be contacted in order to ensure that parents are in agreement. Providing a non-contact order is not in place.

The Headteacher will use their discretion on the decision to allow a child to leave the premises with a non-resident parent.

Obtaining consent

If parental consent is required for outings or activities, the school will seek consent from the resident parent, unless the decision is likely to have a long-term and significant impact on the child; or the non-resident parent has requested to be asked for consent in all such cases.

In cases where the school considers it necessary to seek consent from both parents, it is possible that one gives consent and the other withholds it. In such cases, the school will assume that parental consent has not been given.

The school will not get involved with any disputes on consent and confirmation of the refusal of consent will be confirmed in writing (Appendix 2).

Name changes

A change of a child's name is private law and as such parents are responsible for resolving potential conflicts about the change of a surname.

There must be consent in writing from both parents after divorce or separation for registering a change of name of a pupil.

The school will ensure that the change in surname is supported by written evidence.

A separated parent who has parental responsibility, but no longer lives with the child, may refuse to consent to changing the child's surname. In such cases, the parent wishing to change the child's name would need to apply to the courts for permission do so.

In circumstances where a name change has already been effected by the school and it is in the interest of the child, who might be known by a new name, to refer back to a different name, the school will make a decision holding the best interests of the child under paramount consideration.

Offering Support

We recognise that separation can cause real upheaval in people's lives. We will endeavour to provide pastoral support for the children in these cases. However, the school will not act as mediators for the parents and will signpost parents to other services and professional agencies if the parents wish to seek further advice and support.

Appendix 1 Keeping Separated Families Informed

Please complete the form below and return to the school office indicating how you would like to be kept informed about your child's education.

Name of parent:
Name of child/children:
Address:
Telephone number/s:
Email:

Please select the best way to send information to you:

□ By ParentPay (E-mail & Text Messages)
□ By Class Dojo

Below is the type of information that will be sent:

- School Newsletter
- Information about upcoming events/trips
- Parents' Evenings
- General school updates/communication

□ Please tick this box if an additional copy of end of year reports are required.

Appendix 2 – Consent Letter

COLLATON ST MARY C of E (AIDED) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Executive Head: Claire Platt, B.A., P.G.C.E, NPQH
Member of ACE (Academy for Character and Excellence)

Headteacher: Ben Nelson-Smith BA (Hons)
Executive Head: Cristy Nelson BA (Hons)

Blagdon Road, Paignton, Devon, TQ3 3YA
Tel/Fax 01803 556433
Email: admin.collaton@acexcellence.co.uk
Website: www.collatonstmaryprimary.org

Date:

Parent name

Parent address

Dear [name],

The school recently asked you to sign and return a consent form for [insert details].

On this occasion, you [granted/didn't grant] consent, but [name of other parent] [granted/didn't grant] consent.

In situations like this, it's our school's policy to act as though consent **hasn't been given** if both parents don't agree.

This means that, at present, [pupil name] won't [include details, e.g 'be attending the school trip to the Globe Theatre'].

If you and [name of other parent] wish to change your response to the consent request, you both need to inform the school in writing. Please email [insert email address] by [insert date].

Yours sincerely,

BNSmith

Ben Nelson-Smith
Headteacher