

RIVERSIDE SCHOOL



Separated Families Policy

APPROVED BY GOVERNORS

RESPONSIBLE PERSON – HEADTEACHER

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Statement of Intent

Riverside School recognises that pupils where families 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 families to promote the welfare of children.

This policy has been created to minimise any impact and to clarify to all parties what is expected from separated families, and what can be expected from the school and its staff.

1. Definitions

Schools have a legal duty to work in partnership with families and to involve all those with parental responsibility (PR) 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).

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.

Where the school is aware of a court order, this must be respected. The school has a legal duty to follow the directions of the court order.

Individuals who have parental responsibility (for example caring for pupils who are under a care order) have the same rights as natural parents. This includes the right to:

- receive information e.g., pupil reports, school event notifications etc.;
- participate in activities;
- give consent e.g., for school trips etc.; and
- be involved in meetings concerning the child e.g., participating in an exclusion procedure, appeal against admission decisions etc.

2. Headteacher's Responsibilities

The headteacher, or their appointed member of staff, 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, addresses and contact details of all parents, where known, are included in the admissions register as well as in the pupil's records. These will be available to the pupil's teachers and appropriate members of staff.

The headteacher will ensure that names, addresses and contact details of all parents are forwarded to any school or educational establishment to which the pupil moves. The headteacher will ensure that details of court orders are noted in the pupil's record.

3. Parental Responsibilities

Parents of pupils joining the school are asked to bring their child's birth certificate and/or other relevant documentation as agreed in the admissions procedures. This ensures pupils are joining the correct year group and also helps the school to ascertain who has parental responsibility for the pupil.

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 all parents will be treated equally.

Where there is a court mandated order in place, a copy needs to be retained by the school. The school will use this information to put measures in place to ensure the pupil is safeguarded and court orders are followed.

Parents who have joint custody of a child are requested to keep the school informed, in writing, of any relevant information or disputes they have regarding the child.

Pupil's welfare and safety is paramount, where there are issues over access to pupils, the parent with whom the child resides should contact the school immediately. The other parents should also contact the school and all relevant documentation, including Police or court orders should be made available to the school in order to safeguard pupils.

Except in exceptional circumstances the school holds one parent's evening appointment per child, where all with parental responsibility are welcome.

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. Except in exceptional circumstances, the school will not deal individually with these requests.

4. Progress Reports and Pupil Records

Any parent has the right to receive progress reports other relevant pupil documents and information. If the parents are separated or divorced, progress reports will be sent to the parent and address listed in the pupil's records, with the expectation that they will share the report with the other parent. However, any parents may request that documents are also sent to their home address, even if this is not the primary address for the pupil.

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

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

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 all 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, if a parent is being disruptive, or there is a safeguarding concern that indicates that the pupil should not leave with a parent, the Police and/ or other relevant agencies, such as Children's Social Care Services, will be notified immediately.

5. 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, if this is not the usual routine for the child, or there are reasons to suggest a possible safeguarding concern, then the resident parent will be contacted in order to ensure that parents are in agreement, providing a court order is not in place.

The headteacher, or their nominated member of staff, will use their discretion to allow a child to leave the premises with a non-resident parent.

6. 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 parent may give consent and the other withholds it. In such cases, the school will assume that parental consent has not been given.

If the school is required to obtain consent for medical or emergency procedures, hospital admissions etc., the resident parent will be the first person called by the school.

7. Name Changes

Parents are responsible for resolving potential conflicts regarding the change of a surname.

There must be consent from both parents after a divorce or separation for registering a change of name for a pupil. Where there is a disagreement, the school will abide by any court orders received.

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

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

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

8. Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed every two years, or sooner if there are any relevant legislative changes. It is reviewed by the headteacher, and is approved by the governing board.