



Separated Parents Policy

Date approved by St Stephen's CE Primary School	Autumn 2026
Review Date:	Autumn 2029
Approved by:	Full Governing Body

Our School Vision

At St Stephen's we build each other up in love and learning, embracing our strengths and developing a passion for lifelong learning. We create opportunities for children to know how to stay safe and see themselves as unique, courageous and resilient global citizens - to be upstanders for fairness and equity and against discrimination and injustice.

1. Introduction

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

We will maintain our open door policy with all parents, and the class teacher and/or a senior member of staff will be available by appointment to discuss any issues.

2. Definition of a Parent

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 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 care 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:

- Attendance at parent meetings/school events
- Appeal against admission decisions;
- Ofsted and school based questionnaires; Participate in any exclusion procedure;
- Attend parent meetings/school events;
- Having access to school records and receiving copies of school reports, newsletters, invitations to school events, school photographs relating to their child and information about school trips.
- All parent-directed school communications.

The school's Governing Body recognises 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 another.

3. Parental Responsibility

The information provided to the school when the child was enrolled detailing parents with 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.

At St Stephen's Primary School, our sole wish is to promote the best interests of the child, working in partnership with all 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 an 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. Where there is change of circumstance, the school has the right to consult outside agencies to understand if the court order will be changed or affected.

If there is shared parental responsibility and one parent seeks to remove the child from school, the school cannot prevent the parent from taking the child. If this will be a contravention of an agreed arrangement or court order, the school will discuss this with the parent who will be taking the child and inform the other parent that the child has been collected. It will then be the parental decision what action to take.

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.

It is not the school's responsibility to call the police unless the child is in immediate danger. St Stephen's school would prevent a parent taking a child if staff felt that the child might be at risk of harm and the police would be called. The child would be supervised by an appropriate member of staff in a separate room during this time.

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.

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

4. School Communications

The school recognises that effective communication is vital to a child's progress, and we aim to keep all parties with Parental Responsibility equally informed.

- Newsletters and general school updates will be sent to all parents by email. These updates will contain all the main events within school, including productions, sports days, parent's evenings, class trips, etc. In addition, all parents are recommended to regularly use the school's website – it contains back dated newsletters, a live calendar and has a range of information and links.
- We will hold two parents' evening appointments per child, per academic year. In addition, we have an open day in the summer term, usually after the reports have been emailed. All parents are welcome. We would expect parents to communicate with each other regarding these arrangements. The school will only consider separate appointments in extenuating circumstances, such as a court order or a case of domestic violence.
- If there is an additional meeting with one parent, it is that parent's responsibility to communicate with the other parent regarding any outcomes or decisions.
- 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.

Please note that in Spring 2026, all parents will have access to Arbor, which will allow both parents to view essential records on their child on a digital platform.

- We expect parents to communicate directly with one another regarding routine matters. The school cannot act as a bridge for relaying messages between households.

Progress reports and Pupil records

Any parent has the right to receive progress reports and review pupil records of their children. If the parents are separated or divorced, progress reports will be sent to the email addresses in the school's records. Paper copies can be requested from the office.

Consent

We need one consent form for children to attend trips, educational events or to appear on any media.

It is the responsibility of each parent to tell us if they do not agree. Disagreements between parents must be resolved between the parents and cannot be resolved by the school or local authority. If it cannot be resolved and we feel it is having a negative impact on the child, the school may refer the matter to the relevant department of the Local Authority.

Consent to medical treatment

If we receive consent from one parent and no response from the second parent, then we take the view of the only consent provided. However, if one parent gives consent and the other declines, the parents should try to resolve this and come to an agreement and then inform us of the outcome. If not resolved, we will not be able to provide medical treatment or immunisations.

Pick Up From School

The school will release children to carers with parental responsibility. The parent must inform the school of any change to who has parental responsibility via the school's 'Authorised Adult Pick-Up Information' Google form, available on our school website.

In extreme circumstances, where 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.

We will be available to all parents, and the class teacher and/or Head Teacher will be available by appointment to discuss a child's education and wellbeing.
