

Stapeley Broad Lane CE Primary School



Separated Parents Policy

Approved by: Headteacher **Date:** 15.04.26

Last reviewed on:

Next review due by: April 28

At Stapeley Broad Lane CE Primary School, we are fully aware that when parents separate, this can be traumatic for any children concerned. With this in mind, we will make every effort to work with both parents to promote the welfare of the children.

Research and experience indicate that whenever separated parents make a concerted effort to work well together and in partnership with school staff to support their child(ren) in their learning and behaviour, the negative impact on children's overall well-being and academic attainment can be reduced.

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.

Definition of 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 biological parents, whether married or not;
- 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.

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
- invitations to school events
- information about school visits
- School photographs relating to their child
- participation in any exclusion procedure and
- dealing with any medical issues that arise and/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.

Parental Responsibility

The school recognises that:

- All parents with **parental responsibility** have the right to be involved in their child's education
- The school will treat all parents equally unless a **court order** states otherwise
- Parents are responsible for informing the school of any legal arrangements that affect their child

The school will request sight of any relevant court orders and keep a copy on file.

The information provided to the school when the child was enrolled, detailing which adults have 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. Similarly, the information provided on

the address(es) where the child resides will be presumed to be correct unless a court order proving otherwise is provided to the school.

In order to safeguard the welfare of children and maintain channels of communication between school and home, we ask parents to inform the school of changes in family circumstances, so that we can sensitively support the child in school. It is the responsibility of the parents to inform school when there is a change in family circumstances, and we encourage parents to tell us at an early stage. The school needs to be kept up to date with contact details, arrangements for collecting children and emergencies. 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.

Parents must inform the school promptly of:

- Changes in living arrangements
- Changes in legal responsibility
- Any court orders affecting the child

The school cannot act on verbal claims alone without appropriate legal documentation.

Court Orders

At Stapeley Broad Lane C of E Primary School, our sole aim is to promote the best interests of the child by working in partnership with all parents and/or those with parental responsibility. If the parents are involved in proceedings before the Court directly relating to the child(ren), the parents should seek the Court's permission to disclose the Court order(s) made to the school.

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. A sealed Court order is an order which contains the Court's official stamp, which endorses and makes the order valid and enforceable.

The school is not responsible for enforcing any Court order but will endeavour to adhere to any restrictions in place regarding the collection of a child, or restrictions regarding the extent to which a parent can participate in their child's school life.

Consent

In line with DfE guidance, where we need parental consent to outings and activities, we 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 we consider it necessary or we have been asked to seek consent from both parents, it is best for the school to assume that parental consent has not been given unless both parents have given consent. Such an approach ensures that the school has treated the views of each parent equally and will also help to safeguard the position of the school in terms of exposure to any potential civil liability where, for example, the child is injured while on a school trip.

We may experience problems when a child has had an accident, and consent may be needed for emergency medical treatment. The Children Act 1989 states that people who do not have parental responsibility but nonetheless have care of a child may: '...do what is reasonable in all the circumstances of the case for the purpose of safeguarding or promoting the child's welfare'. This would allow the school to act 'in loco parentis', i.e. in place of a parent, or allow us to seek consent from a parent who may not hold parental responsibility.

The DfE advises that it would clearly be reasonable for a school to take a child who needs to have a wound stitched up to the hospital, but the parents, including the non-resident parent who has asked to be kept informed of events involving the child, should be informed as soon as possible.

Communication with Parents

Bulletins, newsletters, and general updates are sent via email to all parents and/or those with parental responsibility for whom we have up-to-date contact details. These updates contain information on main class/school events, including parents' evenings, productions, sports days, class outings, and events.

Unless a Court order is in place, the school recognises that both parents and/or those with parental responsibility and/or those with care of the child are entitled to attend events such as sports days, performances, fairs etc. The school will endeavour, where possible, to accommodate separate requests for invitations to such events. However, we would appreciate it if parents could communicate directly on such matters to attempt to come to an arrangement whenever possible. We understand this may not be feasible in cases where a Court order prevents the parties from contacting each other. While the school will try to comply with these requests, there may be circumstances where it is not possible, particularly if a Court order prevents contact with the child or between the parents.

The school will consider requests for separate parents' evening appointments for separated, divorced or estranged parents and parents who have parental responsibility.

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

Written pupil reports

Any parent (as defined under Section 576 of the Education Act 1996), including those who have parental responsibility for a child, who is known to the school, 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. The legal requirement is for the school to provide an annual written report. At Stapeley Broad Lane C of E Primary, we provide written pupil reports at the end of the academic year. This report will be sent via secure email to both parents, where requested.

Collection of Children

The school will release children to parents in accordance with arrangements notified to the school. If one parent seeks to remove the child from school in contravention of the usual arrangements, and the parent to whom the child would normally be released has not notified the school of any change, the following steps will be followed:

- Where a separated parent, who has parental responsibility and no court order in place, wishes to take the child during or at the end of the school day, the resident parent will be contacted in order to ensure that they are in agreement with the arrangement. If the parent to whom the child would normally be released agrees, the child may be released, and the records will reflect that the permission was granted verbally. If the parent opposes the other parent wanting to take the child, then the school will advise that, without a court order, we cannot prevent them from doing so.

- In the event that the parent to whom the child would normally be released to cannot be reached, the Head Teacher or staff member dealing with the issue will make a decision based upon all relevant information available to him/her.
- During any discussion or communication with parents, 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 should be notified immediately

Disputes and disagreements

At Stapeley Broad Lane C of E Primary, we hope that parents and all those with parental responsibility will support the school in working together for the benefit of their children. It is important to note that any dispute between parents sharing these rights must be resolved between them. In cases where parents and/or those with parental responsibility cannot agree on various issues, they should seek independent legal advice to explore options for resolution, either by agreement or by obtaining a Court order.

Parents are encouraged to resolve contact issues without involving the school directly. Stapeley Broad Lane CE Primary School staff will not attempt to mediate or resolve disagreements and disputes between parents. Staff will remain neutral in all parental disputes, focus solely on the best interests of the child and not become involved unless there is a safeguarding concern. All disagreements and disputes should, wherever possible, be resolved between the parents and/or their legal representatives, rather than by the school or Local Authority.

Access to School information

Key information is available on the Stapeley Broad Lane C of E Primary's website and via the School Spider app. Parents may also receive information via email. For parents who do not have internet access, paper copies of communications can be requested from the school.

All parents have the right to contact the school and ask questions and request documentation on an individual basis. Any correspondence resulting from this is confidential between the school and the parent who has made contact.

Where parents request information for use in court proceedings, the school will advise the parent that any such request should be made by the Court through a Court order or by a CAFCASS officer. In response to such a request, the school will ensure that any information provided to the Court/ CAFCASS officer is factual, evidence-based, avoids speculation and relates to issues within the School's remit.

Safeguarding

The child's welfare is the school's priority at all times.

If there are concerns about a child's safety, the school will follow safeguarding procedures in line with statutory guidance.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

The school will:

- Handle all personal information in accordance with data protection laws
- Share information appropriately with all parents who have parental responsibility

Conclusion

At Stapeley Broad Lane CE Primary School, we understand that in some cases, personal family problems can additionally have an impact on the school the children attend. We endeavour to work positively and in partnership with parents, but we have a clear expectation that parents' behaviour, even in difficult circumstances, is in keeping with expectations set out in our policies relating to how parents and staff communicate.