

Separated Parents Policy



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Review Frequency	Every 2 years
Date for Next Review	Sept 2025
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Introduction:

This Policy aims to show how staff at Whale Hill Primary School will work with families, in the best interests of children, in some specific, potentially challenging circumstances; for example after parents separate. It should be read in conjunction with our other policies and information on the website. In matters where interpretation is unclear the decision of the Head teacher is final.

Background:

We expect all members of the school family to treat everyone with care, courtesy and respect. We see education as a partnership between parents/carers and school and will work to promote this view. Schools have a legal duty to work in partnership with families and to involve all those with parental responsibility in their child's education (see Appendix A Guidance on Parental Responsibility). This obligation on schools continues even when family circumstances change, for example, relationships between parents break down. It is generally in the best interest of children if parents and schools can work together.

Delivery:

Below we have listed the ways in which we will work with absent parents to continue to involve them in their child's education:

- Half termly newsletter available and can be emailed electronically to non-residential parent if requested.
- Downloadable app (Parent Mail) available to all, with individual notification of updates relating to a child. Log on details available from school.
- Timely information about upcoming events provided via the website and Facebook
- Separate appointments can be offered for parent's evenings at mutually convenient times.
- Additional copies of end of year reports provided either in the post, or electronically.

Parents of children joining the school meet with the Head teacher and 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. At this stage the school will discuss the contents of the Policy if required.

Separated parents are required to inform the school and to return a form (Appendix B) indicating ways in which they would like to be kept informed.

Children's welfare and safety are paramount and, where there are issues over access to children, the parent with whom the child resides should contact the school immediately. Where there is a court restraining order in place, the school will put in place measures to ensure the child is not released to a named individual. Where a separated parent has parental responsibility and there is no court order in place, the school is required to allow the child home with them; however the Head Teacher is able to use their discretion and would seek clarification if it was felt there was a child protection issue. The welfare of the child is at the heart of all we do and the Head teacher and Governors of the school maintain the right to discontinue any of the above if it is deemed to be significantly against the child's best interests. Court orders may also alter the position the school adopts.

**Working with separated parents – Appendix A
Guidance on Parental Responsibility**

In order to help us to look after your children whilst they are in our care, we are required to ask you to provide certain information, such as name of parents, address, contact details etc. We are also required to ask who has Parental Responsibility for your child. This is important because it allows us to be sure who has the right to make decisions about your child's education and medical treatment. However, we are aware that this is a very specific legal term and many of you may be unaware of how it is applied. This leaflet aims to provide you with an explanation of who has parental responsibility so that you are able to provide us with accurate information.

PR definition:

Parental Responsibility is a Legal Term, which refers to the legal rights and responsibilities relating to a child. It is the right to consent to medical treatment for a child, have a say in decisions relating to schooling/education, what the child's name is and other important decisions in a child's life as they grow up. It also places a responsibility to keep the child safe and provide financially.

Mothers automatically have Parental Responsibility for their child. Fathers who are married to their child's Mother share these rights.

Unmarried Fathers will only have Parental Responsibility if they are named as the child's father on the Birth Certificate and their child was born on or after 1st December 2003. If not on the Birth Certificate, Fathers can acquire Parental Responsibility by way of a Court Order or by entering into a Parental Responsibility agreement with the Mother. This is a specific legal document that is drawn up, signed by both parents and lodged with the Court.

Parental responsibility can only be lost if a legal adoption is made, but it can be affected if Court orders are made in favour of Social Services. In this instance, the Local Authority/Social Services can have an "overriding" Parental Responsibility and make decisions they feel are best for the child even if Parents do not agree.

It is important to note that even if a parent has Parental Responsibility for a child, it is not an automatic right to see and spend time with a child. This is a separate legal issue.

If you would like further guidance, there is clear information on the government website www.direct.gov

Parent communication:

At Whale Hill Primary School, we are committed to working with families and understand the importance of continuing the relationship between school and parents who do not live with their child.



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:	Year group:
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Address: _____

Postcode _____

Telephone number/s:

Email:

Please circle the best way to send information to you:

Via your child By email By post

Please confirm the information you would like to receive:

- Appointments offered for parent's evenings at appropriate times.
- Additional copies of end of year reports.
- School photographs