

Separated Parents Policy



Preston Grange Primary School

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Next review due: March 2026

Separated Parents Policy

It is the case at Preston Grange Primary School that some of our children's parents are separated. We recognise that this can be a difficult situation and our main aim is not to put any additional stress on the children concerned. The child is our main priority and we hope parents will make every effort to recognise this and support us and their child. This guidance will apply unless the school is made aware of any Court Orders in place and has a copy of the documentation as confirmation. Parents and partners may need to check on who has official parental responsibility and provide evidence of this. We will ask for sight of a child's full, long birth certificate on joining the school to confirm parental responsibility.

Evidence shows that after separation children do best when those around them cooperate, provide stability, and avoid conflict. We understand that this can be difficult and parents can become estranged. Our aim is to work with all parties to promote positive family involvement. This policy clarifies what is expected from separated parents and carers, the school and its staff.

The following information has been taken from the document 'Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parents responsibility' DfE, January 2016:

Defining who is a parent

Parents may be recognised differently under education law than under family law. For the purposes of education law, section 576 of the Education Act 2002 defines a 'parent' as:

- All natural (biological) parents, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has responsibility for a child or young person (this could be a step-parent, guardian or other relative);
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

The terms 'resident' and 'non-resident' parents are used to distinguish between parents who do and do not live with a child.

What is Parental Responsibility?

In family law, parental responsibility means all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority that a parent has in relation to the child. More than one person can hold and exercise parental responsibility for a child. The parental responsibility of one party does not stop simply because another person is also given it. So, in some cases several people may be regarded as being the 'parent' of a child.

General principles

School staff must treat all parents equally, unless there is a Court Order limiting an individual's exercise of parental responsibility. Everyone who is a parent as defined under education law (whether they are the resident parent or not, with or without parental responsibility, has a right to participate in decisions about a child's education and receive information about the child (even though, for day-to-day purposes, the school's main contact is likely to be a parent with whom the child lives on school days.)

Individuals who have parental responsibility for, or care of, a child have the same rights as natural parents; for example:

- To receive information, e.g. pupil reports
- To participate in statutory activities; e.g. vote in elections for parent governors;
- To be informed about meetings involving the child; e.g. a governors' meeting on the child's exclusion.

Where a parent's action, or proposed action, conflicts with the school's ability to act in the child's best interests, the school should try to resolve the problem with that parent but avoid becoming involved in conflict. However, there may be occasions when a school needs to decline requests for action from one or more parents.

In cases where schools cannot resolve the conflict between separate parents, they should advise the aggrieved parents to pursue the matter through the Family Court.

Preston Grange Primary School will ensure they follow these guidelines and treat all parents fairly by following these guidelines:

- It is the responsibility of parents to inform the school when there is a change in the family's circumstances. We need to be kept up to date with contact details, and arrangements for collecting children and emergencies. These all need to be put in writing to the school office.
- The information provided to school when the pupil was enrolled, detailing whether both parents have parental responsibility, will be presumed to be correct unless a court order or original birth certificate proving otherwise is provided to the school.
- We will make all parents aware of the school website, which is the main point of reference for all news from school. If parents inform us of their up to date contact details, we will also be able to send texts from school to both parents.
- Parents are responsible for providing correct current contact details. Occasionally paper letters are sent home with pupils and we expect parents to communicate these

messages to each other as and when appropriate.

- We will hold one parent's evening appointment per child where both parents are welcome and we expect parents to communicate with each other regarding these arrangements. If parents are seen individually, they will be offered a 5 minute appointment each.
- We expect parents to liaise and communicate directly with each other in matters such as the ordering of school photographs. Where there are ticketed events, we automatically split the tickets between both parents.
- Both parents are entitled to receive progress reports and review their child's pupil records. The school will post copies of progress reports to the non-custodial parent as long as we have been made aware of the circumstances, and if a written request is submitted to the school office.
- Both parents are legally entitled to collect their child from school unless a court order is provided that states otherwise. 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. In all cases, the school will be mindful of its safeguarding responsibilities and may use its discretion not to send a child home with a particular parent.

The welfare of the child is at the heart of all we do and the Headteacher maintains 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.

If a family feels that exceptions to any part of this policy are necessary they are invited to put this in writing to the Headteacher. Where the school deems it necessary, a separate plan will be put into place and agreed by the school and all individuals who hold parental responsibility.