



## Willow Farm Primary School

### **Policy**

#### Separated Parents Policy

Signed: L. Jamson

Date: June 23

Nominated staff member responsible for policy Lindsey Jamson

## Introduction and background to the policy

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 in school.

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.

The definition of a parent or 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:

- Appeal against admission decisions;
- Ofsted & school based questionnaires;
- Participate in any exclusion procedures;
- Attend parent meetings/school events;

- Have access to school records and receive copies of school reports, newsletters, invitations to school events, school photographs relating to their child and information about school trips and when requested all letters sent out either by parentmail or post

The Governing Body recognise 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 and restrict another.

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

At Willow Farm Primary and Nursery 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 with 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. The school also has no responsibility for enforcing any court order. In the event that the school is not informed of the existence of such an order, neither parent will have the rights superior to the other.

Parents are encouraged to resolve contact issues without involving the school directly. The interests of the child will always be paramount when deciding 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.
- Newsletters and general school updates can be sent to all parents via piota app. These updates will contain all the main events within school, including productions, sports days, parent's evenings, class trips etc. Information from each class teacher is communicated via Seesaw. Very occasionally letters are sent to individual classes as a paper copy only. We expect parents to communicate these messages to each other as and when appropriate. However, if requested we can post all letters if stamped addressed envelopes are provided.
- We plan for one parents evening appointment per child where all parents are welcome. We expect parents to communicate with each other regarding these

arrangements. However if this is really not feasible then additional appointments can be arranged on request. Separate appointments will be given if there is a court order in place restricting parents attending together.

- 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.

## 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 parents electronically (unless a paper copy is requested). It is the parents responsibility to make us aware of changes in circumstances.

If the child is subject to joint residence order, or there is shared residency, and the school's records formally capture that the child resides at two addresses, then progress reports will be sent to both addresses electronically (unless paper copies are requested).

Disagreements between parents must be resolved between parents and cannot be resolved by the school or local authority. In the event that the parents are unable to agree with one another on decisions regarding their child's educational programme, including but not limited to placement, participation in extra- curricular activities, and consent to evaluation services, the school will arrange a meeting with all parents (preferably together or separately if required) to attempt to assist the parents to resolve the situation. However, school will not put themselves in the centre of parental conflict. Staff are also very aware that mediation is not helpful to some parents, especially where domestic abuse may have occurred historically or may be happening currently,

There is a mediation service offered by Notts Family Service if parents choose to use it. These can be contacted by calling 01623 433500 or by emailing [earlyhelp@nottscs.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:earlyhelp@nottscs.gcsx.gov.uk). School will support either parent (or both) to access services to support with mediation.

## Collecting a child from school

The school will release children to parents in accordance with arrangements notified to the school. These arrangements may be that either parent can collect their child on any day in which case no further action would be taken. If an arrangement is in place which the school have been informed about, and one parent seeks to remove the child from school in contravention of the notified arrangements, the following steps will be followed:

- The head teacher or deputy head teacher will meet with the parent seeking to remove the child and, in his/her presence, telephone the parent to whom the child would normally be released and explain the request.

- 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 orally.
- 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 may make a decision based upon all relevant information available or if necessary ring the relevant section of the Local Authority for advice. Notes will be taken of all conversations.
- The head teacher or staff member may refuse permission if consent cannot be obtained.
- During any discussion or communication with parents, the child will be supervised by an appropriate member of staff.
- 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 will be notified immediately.

In the case that a parent needs to be contacted regarding illness or behaviour matters, parents/carers will be contacted in order of emergency contact priority, as per their admission paperwork. If they are non-contactable, the other contacts will be contacted in priority order. If parents wish the school to have a bespoke arrangement both parents must agree an arrangement in writing with the school.

All parents can have equal access to all school information via our piota system/ seesaw or school website.

We maintain an open-door policy with all of our parents, and the class teacher and head teacher will be available by appointment to discuss any issues.

The school will do all it can to support children going through traumatic situations providing support and counselling services when this is agreed by the parents.