Separated Parents Policy

UNCR Articles Relevant to the Policy

Article 3 The best interests of the child must be top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children

Article 18 Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their child and should always consider what is best for the child. Governments must support parents by creating support services for children and giving parents the help they need to raise their children.

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Statement of intent

Colindale Primary School recognises that children from families whose parents are separated, or are undergoing separation, may go through traumatic changes during their time at school. With this in mind, we will make every effort to work with parents to promote the welfare of children.

This policy has been created 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.

1. Definitions

1.1. Schools have a legal duty to work in partnership with families and to involve all those with parental responsibility in their child's education. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines a 'parent' as:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person (a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child).

1.2. Parents as defined above must be treated equally, unless there is a court order limiting an individual's exercise of parental responsibility. 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.

1.3. Individuals who have parental responsibility, or care for a child, have the same rights as natural parents. This includes the right to:

- Receive information (e.g. pupil reports, school events etc.).
- Participate in activities (e.g. elections for parent governors).
- Give consent (e.g. for school trips).
- Be involved in meetings concerning the child (e.g. participate in an exclusion procedure, appeal against admission decisions).

2. Headteacher responsibilities

2.1. The Headteacher will ask parents or guardians for the names and addresses of all parents when they register a pupil.

2.2. It is the duty of the Headteacher to ensure that names and addresses of all parents, where known, are included in the admission register and also in pupil records, and are available to the pupil's teachers.

2.3. The Headteacher will ensure that names and addresses of all parents are forwarded to any school to which the pupil moves.

2.4. The Headteacher will ensure that details of court orders are noted in the pupil's record.

2.5. Where the address of a non-resident parent is unknown, the Headteacher will tell the resident parent that the non-resident parent is entitled to be involved in their child's education and request that information is passed on to them.

3. Parental responsibilities

3.1. Parents of children joining the school 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.

3.2. Parents are responsible for informing the school when there is a change in family circumstances. We recognise the sensitivity of such situations and we will maintain confidentiality requested by parents as far as possible. The school will also not make judgements about individual circumstances, and both parents will be treated equally.

3.3. Where there is a court mandated restraining order in place, a copy needs to be retained by the school, which will put measures in place to ensure the child is not released to named individuals.

3.4. Parents who have joint custody of the child are requested to keep the school informed, in writing, of any disputes they have with each other regarding the collection of children.

3.5. Leave of absence request forms signed by one parent must be accompanied by a letter of consent from the other parent.

3.6. Children's welfare and safety are paramount, where there are issues over access to children, the parent with whom the child resides should contact the school immediately.

3.7. The school holds one parents consultation evening appointment per child where both parents are welcome, but can organise for separate parent consultation meetings if deemed necessary, following a parental request.

3.8. The school expects parents to communicate with each other regarding these arrangements.

3.9. Parents are expected to liaise and communicate directly with each other in matters such as the ordering of school photographs, tickets for performances and other instances. The school will not deal individually with these requests in view of the significantly increased workload that they represent.

4. Progress reports and pupil records

4.1. Any parent has the right to receive progress reports and review pupil records of their child.

4.2. If the parents are separated or divorced, progress reports will be sent to the parent and address noted in the school's records specifying where the child

resides with the expectation that they will share the report with the other parent.

4.3. If the child is subject to a joint residence order and the school's records formally capture that the child resides at two addresses, then progress reports will be sent to both addresses.

4.4. The school will send copies of the progress reports to a parent with whom the child does not reside only if that parent submits a written request.

4.5. Disagreements between parents must be resolved between the parents and cannot be resolved by the school.

4.6. 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 and participation in extracurricular activities, the school will arrange a meeting with all parents in order to assist the parents in resolving the situation.

4.7. The school will maintain an open door policy with both parents and the class teacher will be available to discuss any issues.

4.8. 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.

5. Collecting a child from school

5.1. Where a separated parent has parental responsibility, and needs to take the child during or at the end of the school day, the resident parent will be contacted in order to ensure that parents are in agreement, providing a non-contact order is not in place.

5.2. The Headteacher will use their discretion on the decision to allow a child to leave the premises with a non-resident parent.

6. Obtaining consent

6.1. If parental consent is required for outings or activities, the school 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.

6.2. In cases where the school considers it necessary to seek consent from both parents, it is possible that one gives consent and the other withholds it. In such cases, the school will assume that parental consent has not been given.

7. Name changes

7.1. Parents are responsible for resolving potential conflicts about the change of a surname.

7.2. There must be consent from both parents after divorce or separation for registering a change of name of a pupil.

7.3. The school will ensure that the change in surname is supported by written evidence.

7.4. A separated parent who has parental responsibility, but no longer lives with the child, may refuse to consent to changing the child's surname. In such cases, the parent wishing to change the child's name would need to apply to the courts for permission do so.

7.5. In circumstances where a name change has already been effected by the school and it is in the interest of the child, who might be known by a new name, to refer back to a different name, the school will make a decision holding the best interests of the child under paramount consideration.

8. Monitoring and review

8.1. This policy is reviewed every three years by the Headteacher.