



Hardwick and Cambourne Community Primary School

Separated Parents Policy

Date Written: Autumn 2021
Reviewed by: Governing Body
Next Planned Review: Autumn 2025

Safeguarding Statement

At Hardwick and Cambourne Community Primary School we respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn, in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. We believe every pupil should be able to participate in all school activities in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. This is the responsibility of every adult employed by, or invited to deliver services at Hardwick and Cambourne Community Primary School. We recognise our responsibility to safeguard all who access school and promote the welfare of all our pupils by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and bullying.

Introduction

Hardwick and Cambourne Community Primary School recognises that children from families whose parents are separated, or are undergoing separation, may experience difficult or traumatic changes during their time at school. With this in mind, we will make every effort to work in partnership with parents to promote the welfare of children. This policy has been created to minimise any adverse impact of separation on pupils' learning and wellbeing and to clarify to all parties what is expected from separated parents and what can be expected from the school.

Definitions

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) 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. 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).

Responsibilities of the school:

We will ensure:

- That the school has arrangements in place to ask parents or guardians for the names and addresses of all parents when they register a pupil.
- 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.
- That names and addresses of all parents are forwarded to any school to which the pupil moves.
- That details of court orders are noted in the pupil's record
- Where the address of a non-resident parent is unknown, the Head Teacher 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.

Parental responsibilities:

Parents of children joining Hardwick and Cambourne are requested to bring into school their child's birth certificate. This ensures children are joining the correct year group and also helps the school ascertain who has parental responsibility.

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. Where there is a court order in place, a copy needs to be retained by the school. We will put measures in place to ensure the child is not released to any individuals named in the court order as persons who do not have parental responsibility.

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. The school requests that any leave of absence request form is agreed between both parents before sending in to school.

It is the school's policy to hold one parents evening appointment per child, where both parents are welcome. Separated parents may request alternate appointments and the school will endeavour to accommodate this, wherever possible. Online appointments can also be made available. Parents are expected to communicate with each other regarding these arrangements.

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 such instances.

Progress reports and pupil records

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

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.

The school will send copies of the progress report to a parent with whom the child does not reside if that parent submits a written or electronic request for this to happen.

In the matter of the release of a child or children

We will follow the standard agreed procedure in the release of a child or children. In the case of separated parents our school will release a child or children to a parent in accordance with any specific arrangements shared with the school, signed by both parties or a Court Order notified to the school.

If one parent seeks to remove the child from school in contravention of the notified arrangements, and the parent to whom the child would normally be released has not consented the following steps will be followed: -

- The Head Teacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead or Designated deputy will contact 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 verbally.

- The School cannot prevent the other parent collecting the child or children, but we will endeavour to reach an agreement, and this may mean keeping the child or children safe whilst we try and reach such an agreement.
- If there is a Court Order restricting contact or it is in contravention of any access agreement, the child or children will not be released into their care and the other parent will be advised to take the necessary action which does not involve the school. If it is deemed necessary by the school to protect the child or children's health and welfare, the school shall immediately contact the police and the Local Authority where relevant.
- During any discussion or communication with parents, the child or children may be supervised by an appropriate member of school staff in a separate room to avoid causing any upset to the child or children.
- In circumstances if there is a belief that a possible abduction of the child may occur; if the parent is disruptive or the school has reason to believe the child may be at risk of harm, the police and the Local Authority will be notified immediately and the school will continue to act in loco-parentis.

Obtaining Consent for Off Site Activities

If parental consent is required for outings or activities, the school will seek consent from the resident parent.

Name changes:

Parents are responsible for resolving potential conflicts about the change of a surname. There must be consent from both parents after divorce or separation for registering a change of name of a pupil. The school will ensure that the change in surname is supported by written evidence.

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 to do so.

Disputes and disagreements

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

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 assist by facilitating a meeting with all parents if it will assist the parents in resolving the situation.

Where, in the reasonable opinion of the school, the issue requiring parental consent is likely to have a long term and significant impact on the child, the school may require the consent of all those with parental responsibility for the child who are known to the school. An example of the circumstances where joint consent is likely to be required includes the decision to withdraw a child from sex education or religious education within the school curriculum.

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

In extreme circumstances, if there is a belief that a possible abduction of the child may occur or if the parent is threatening, the police will be notified and advice will be sought.