



Milton Road Primary School

Separated Parents Policy

At Milton Road Primary School, we are fully aware that when parents separate this can be very traumatic for any children concerned and, with this in mind, we will make every effort to work with both parents to promote the welfare of the children

Research and experience indicate that whenever separated parents make a concerted effort to work well together and in partnership with school staff to support their child(ren) in their learning and behaviour, the negative impact on children's overall well-being and academic attainment can be reduced.

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.

Definition of a Parent

The definition of a parent for 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 the school. In particular, these entitlements include:

- Appeals against admission decisions;
- Ofsted & school based questionnaires;
- Participation in any exclusion procedure;
- Attendance parent meetings/school events;
- Having access to school records and receiving copies of school reports, newsletters, invitations to school events, school photographs relating to their child and information about school trips

At Milton Road Primary School, we recognise that while the parents of some children 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 to restrict another.

Parental responsibility

The information provided to the school when the child was enrolled detailing which adults 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.

Similarly, the information provided on the address(es) where the child resides will be presumed to be correct unless a court order proving otherwise is provided to the school.

Court Orders

At Milton Road Primary 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 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. Only a court order stating the arrangements is deemed to be valid; a letter from a solicitor is not sufficient. 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 rights superior to the other.

Change in Parent Responsibility/family circumstances

In order to safeguard the welfare of children and maintain channels of communication between school and home, we ask parents to inform the school of changes in family circumstances, so that we can sensitively support the child in school.

It is the responsibility of the parents to inform school when there is a change in family circumstances and we encourage parents to tell us at an early stage. The school needs to be kept up to date with contact details, arrangements for collecting children and emergencies.

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.

Collecting a child from school

The school will release children to parents in accordance with arrangements notified to the school. If one parent seeks to remove the child from school in contravention of the usual arrangements and the parent to whom the child would normally be released has not notified the school of any change the following steps will be followed:

- Where a separated parent, who has parental responsibility and no court order in place, wishes to take the child during or at the end of the school day, the resident parent will be contacted in order to ensure that they are in agreement with the arrangement. 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. If the parent opposes the other parent wanting to take the child then the school will advise that without a court order we cannot prevent them from doing so.
- 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 will make a decision based upon all relevant information available to him/her.
- During any discussion or communication with parents, the child will be supervised by an appropriate member of school staff in a separate room.
- 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 should be notified immediately.

Obtaining Consent

For day to day requests/permissions such as:

- Permission to go on a school trip
- Request to administer medicines
- Permission to stay for an after school club

The school will accept permission from and/or requests from the parent the child is usually resident with, which can mean either parent where there is shared residency. We will not seek permission from both parents in such situations.

In cases where the school considers it necessary to seek consent from both parents, for example, where it is believed that the decision will have a long-term and significant impact on the child, permission will be sought from both parents. In such cases, it is possible that one may give consent and the other withhold it. In such cases, the school will assume that parental consent has not been given.

A leave of absence request form must, if only signed by one parent, be accompanied by a letter of consent from the other parent.

Annual Reports

Any person who has parental responsibility for a child has the right to receive a copy of their child's annual reports. These will be provided to separated, divorced or estranged parents who have parental responsibility and for whom the school has up-to-date contact details.

Parents evening Appointments

Whenever requested, we will offer separate parents' evening appointments for separated, divorced or estranged parents who have parental responsibility.

School communications

We expect that parents, whatever the nature of their separation, will do all they can to communicate with each other and share information from and for the school, for the benefit of their child(ren). It is assumed that the parent with whom the child principally resides will keep the other parent informed.

General school communications will be sent to all parents using our online system Sims InTouch, - parents need to sign up for this system. In turn, information can be viewed on the school website. The school calendar on the school's website provides the dates of main events e.g. drama productions, sports days, parents evening, class trips, and the school's bi-weekly newsletter, which can be accessed on-line also provides updates regarding key school events. We would expect parents to communicate these messages to each other as and when appropriate.

Disputes and disagreements

Parents are encouraged to resolve contact issues without involving the school directly. Milton Road Primary School staff will not attempt to mediate or resolve disagreements and disputes between parents. All disagreements and disputes should, wherever possible, be resolved between the parents and/or their legal representatives, rather than by the school or Local Authority.

Conclusion

At Milton Road Primary School, we understand that in some cases, personal family problems can additionally have an impact on the school the children attend. We endeavour to work positively and in partnership with parents, but we have a clear expectation that parents' behaviour, even in difficult circumstances, is in keeping with expectations set out in our policies relating to how parents communicate with the school.

Ends

Linked Policies:

Communications Policy

Expected behaviour of Parents/Carers Policy

Persistent Complaints and Harassment Policy